RCN BEACH COMMANDO 'W'



E.G. FINLEY

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RCN BEACH COMMANDO "W"

E.G. Finley

RCN Beach Commando "W"

Part I **A chronicle based on official Canadian military archival records of its establishment, training, and operations during World War II.**

Part II **Off-the-record anecdotal "portholes".**

O CANADA -- WE STOOD ON GUARD FOR THEE

To all who contributed to the well-being of our unique Canadian naval unit throughout its year-long existence during the Second World War, PART I of the following chronicle is dedicated.

To those who assisted in creating any of the eleven PORTHOLES or the several appendices, the whole of PART II is dedicated.

PART II

	Location	Subject	Reference
17.	Precedes p.1	Graduation Day	PAC
18.	Opp. p.3	HMCS "Slow Dribble"	K. Macpherson/J. Burgess. The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces, 1910-1981
19.	Opp. p.4	HMT Mauretania	T. Coleman. The Liners. Penguin Books, 1977, p.[178]
20.	Opp. p.11	"Nelson"	PAC. PA-183042
21.	Follows p.14	Admiral Barry	L. Peillard. Coulez le Tirpitz. R. Laffont, 1965, between pp.180 & 181
22.	Opp. p.16	PBM O'Hagan	PAC. PA-131555
23.	Opp. p.23	Some of the Top	PAC
24.	Opp. p.24	"Churchill"	unknown
25.	Opp. p.25	Casualties	Feasby, I, opp. p.376
26.	Opp. p.27	HMT QUEEN MARY	M. Maddocks. The Great Liners. Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1978, p.152
27.	Follows p.28	THE Q.E.'s AFT	Ibid., p.142
28.	Follows p.36	PORTHOLE #11	Front page, The Ottawa Citizen, Dec. 23. 1993.
29.	Opp. p.38	F/L W.H. Pentland	PAC
30.	Opp. p.40	S/L C. MacArthur	Extract from #23 above
31.	Opp. p.41	D DAY	IGN, France, 1994
32.	Opp. p.43	Badge & Flashes	PAC. X-31
		Head-Wound	Feasby, II, opp. p.240
33.	Opp. p.44	Casualties evacuated	Feasby, II, opp. p.352
34.	Opp. p.49	AIR EVACUATION	Feasby, I, opp. p.374
35.	Opp. p.63	Canadian Hospital Ship	Feasby, I, opp. p.71
36.	Opp. p.79	Surg. Capt. Johnstone	PAC

*PAC stands for Public Archives of Canada, Photographic Section

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Finally, special thanks and commendation go to Janet Westall who safely and successfully navigated the good ship RCNBC "W" often through uncharted waters and over rough seas. That the chronicle has finally reached port and the "finished with engines" signal struck on the bridge telegraph is a tribute to her skill, determination, and patience with respect to all the electronic equipment used in its production.

RCN Beach Commando "W"

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Introduction

In the mainly Canadian-manned August 19, 1942, Dieppe raid during World War II, three Royal Naval Beach Parties ("C", "D", and "H") were among the other participating Allied military units.[301] Their principal task related to disembarking troops and vehicles from assault landing craft, organizing and supervising suitable "beach" areas, and loading serviceable vessels at the time of withdrawal. According to Hampshire,

> Of the total of [over 200] naval Beach Party personnel involved in the Dieppe raid, one officer and two ratings were killed, 9 wounded and 51 were officially listed as missing.[302]

As a result, all three RN Beach Parties had to be "totally reconstituted."

Soon after Dieppe the Admiralty made several decisions which affected its Combined Operations Beach Party branch:[303]

1. In relation to Admiral Mountbatten (Chief of Combined Operations)'s suggestion that their name be changed to "Naval Commandos", beach party personnel were authorized to wear "RN Commandos" shoulder flashes above the Combined Operations badge on each arm.

2. By mid-October 1942 Force J had been created and commissioned as HMS Vectis, with its senior officer's headquarters located in the Royal Yacht Squadron premises at Cowes. The Force's permanent group of over a hundred assorted landing craft and ships berthed in the Solent.

3. In North Devon HMS Appledore was commissioned as a beach experimental establishment which subsequently trained frogmen, RN Commandos, and underwater clearance teams.

4. A specialist school for training beach commandos was opened at a camp-site at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Argyll and was subsequently commissioned as HMS Armadillo. Vice-Admiral T. Hallett (Director of Combined Operations training) supervised the production of documents describing requirements for each particular position.

Regarding the use of beach commandos in the eventual invasion of western Europe, Hampshire remarks:[304]

> Twenty of these would be required, two each for three assault divisions, one per assault brigade, with 100% spare in reserve.

Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando "W" came into existence in late 1943 and disbanded at the end of August 1944. Modelled upon its Royal Navy counterpart, "W" comprised eighty-four RCNVR men (12 officers and 72 ratings).

> The Naval Beach Commando is a unit especially trained in the control and handling of landing craft on the beaches ... [and] is designed to handle the landing ships, craft and barges of an assault brigade group and the further ships, craft and barges landed on the same beaches. It is divided into three beach parties, each commanded by a beachmaster (BMr). The Naval Beach Commando is under the command of the principal beachmaster (PBMr).[1]

Attached to each Commando is a separate Beach Signals Section which consists of thirty men (2 officers and 28 ratings). In turn, these combined units work cooperatively with an Army Beach Company (17 officers and 426 other ranks) and form a Beach Group which is responsible for landing a three-battalion assault brigade.[2]

Covering the twelve-month period beginning around September 1943, the following chronicle about "W" Commando is based primarily on documents selected from particular volumes of Record Group 24 in the National Archives of Canada (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY, item B.).

Section 1 Authorizing establishment

One of the earliest references to beach commandos by Canadian naval authorities appears in a Jan. 27, 1943, letter from Commander Commanding Canadian Ships and Establishments in the United Kingdom (CCCS) to Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) in Ottawa.[3] In the letter CCCS (Cdr. F.A. Price, RCNVR at the time) mentions the expansion then occurring in the R.N.'s Combined Operations Beach Party Branch. Because almost the entire five hundred Canadian naval personnel then on loan to the R.N. were serving in landing craft, Price recommends providing an additional hundred seamen with the object of forming one all-Canadian Beach Party unit.[4] The Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) at NSHQ reacts to this recommendation by advising the Director of Plans (DP) on Feb. 25 that he has recently received a request from CCCS for a hundred seamen "to form a purely Canadian Assault Landing Group in the United Kingdom".[5]

Effective Jun. 15, Price's title changed to Senior Canadian Naval Officer, London (SCNO(L)).[6] A fortnight later Lt. W.S. Brooke, RCNVR, replaced Lt. Cdr. K.S. Maclachlan, RCNVR, as Staff Officer, Combined Operations (SO(CO)) under SCNO(L).[7] Brooke, who became an Acting/Lt. Cdr. as of Jul. 30,[8] subsequently played a major role with respect to R.C.N. involvement in combined operations.

As part of a five-page July 15 memorandum to SCNO(L) dealing with training minor landing craft crews in the U.K., Brooke described the R.N. Beach Commando base in HMS Armadillo at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Scotland where each Commando underwent basic training.[9] After spending July 14-18 observing Canadian army units engage in combined operations exercises around Inveraray and Troon, he flew to Canada on Aug. 16 to attend



Lt.Cdr. W. Saurin Brooke, RCNVR
Staff Officer (Combined Operations), SCNO(L),
July 1943 to October 1944

the tail-end of the Allied leaders' August 10-18 "Quadrant" Conference in Quebec City and then proceeded to the West Coast to observe Canadian combined operations activities first hand.[10]

In a report entitled "Canadian Naval Participation in Combined Operations" which he sent to SCNO(L) on Aug. 28, Brooke recommended the types of landing craft both for Canada's two *LSI(M)s and also for the proposed Canadian three-flotilla **LCI(L) squadron.[12] He made no mention, however, of any Beach Commando.

On Aug. 31, the Cabinet War Committee held a special afternoon meeting, chaired by Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, at the Citadel in Quebec City.[13] Besides regular members, others present included U.K.'s Prime Minister (who was also Minister of Defence), Britain's First Sea Lord, as well as Canada's three Chiefs of Staff. The meeting considered operational decisions taken by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the recently concluded "Quadrant" Conference.[14] Speaking on behalf of Mr. Churchill, the First Sea Lord suggested five specific ways that Canada might assist the Royal Navy meet its current manpower shortages:[15]

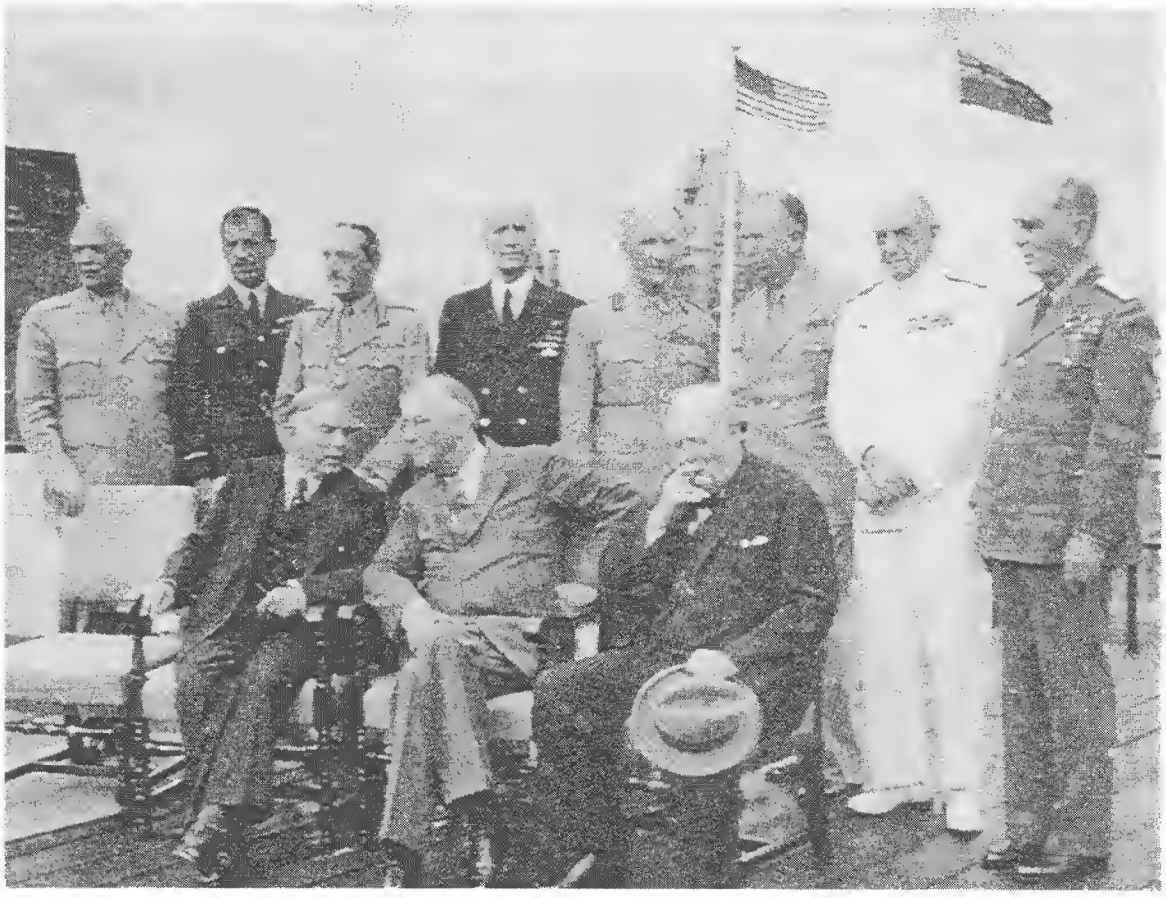
> (1) one or two cruisers to be taken over by the Royal Canadian Navy, at a later date, progressive training of Canadian personnel to be arranged meantime;
>
> (2) two Fleet destroyers to be manned by the R.C.N. in December of this year, or soon after, conditions of transfer to be for subsequent discussion;

* LSI(M) = Landing Ship Infantry (Medium)

** LCI(L)= Landing Craft Infantry (Large). Normally a flotilla contained twelve landing craft and three flotillas formed a squadron.[11]



"Quadrant" Conference, Quebec City, August 1943.
Seated, left to right: Mackenzie King, Roosevelt, Churchill.



(3) the R.C.N. to form a Canadian unit of three flotillas of landing craft complete with squadron and flotilla staffs (approximately 350 men), training, in Britain, to be completed by the spring of 1944;

(4) the R.C.N. to form one Beach Commando and one Beach Signal Unit (approximately 1,000 [sic] men), training, in Britain, to be completed by the spring of 1944; and

(5) the R.C.N. to provide 120 "C.W." (Commission Warrant) candidates for training in Britain and loan to the Royal Navy.

After mentioning that these proposals had already received preliminary study by Canada's Naval staff, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services pointed out that due to a slowdown in deliveries of escort vessels from Canadian shipyards and by making certain arrangements, "it would be possible to meet the British requests within the limit of the present Naval programme."[16] Following brief statements by the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), the Minister of Finance, Mr. Churchill, and finally Canada's Prime Minister, the War Committee "agreed that the proposals submitted be referred to the Chief of the Naval Staff for detailed examination with the First Sea Lord, and subsequent report by the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services for consideration by the War Committee."[17]

By approving these proposals at its next meeting on Sept. 8, Canada's Cabinet War Committee thereby officially authorized the establishment of a Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando.[18] The following constitutes a summary of Paragraphs #13 to #20 of the minutes of proceedings which appear under the heading "Navy: British proposals for further assistance: aircraft carriers"

13. The essence of a Naval Staff report on the various British proposals appears in Cabinet War Committee Document #604[19] which was circulated on Sept. 7 with the agenda for next day's meeting.

14. The Prime Minister points out that the War Committee has been placed in a difficult position at the August 31 meeting because the British proposals "had been put to the government without notice of any kind".

15. The Chief of the Naval Staff indicates that while "the First Sea Lord had, at an early stage in the Quebec Conference, discussed informally with members of the Canadian Naval staff various proposals for Canadian assistance to the Royal Navy", he hadn't expected any specific proposals to be brought forward on August 31.

16. Commenting on the Naval Staff report, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services felt that the 3,200 personnel required to meet the proposed commitments "could be provided within the limits of the approved Naval programme....." He estimated that an additional 4,350 men would be needed to man and provide shore facilities for two aircraft carriers.

17. & 18. Naval Staff, according to its Chief, recommends accepting the Admiralty's proposals and making a start on acquiring two aircraft carriers.

19. Noting that "Canada has now reached the limits of her (human and material) resources in the war effort", the Prime Minister declares that "no new commitments could be accepted."

20. "The War Committee, after further discussion, agreed:

 a) that acceptance of the U.K. proposals be approved in principle, on condition that their implementation, together with the proposals regarding aircraft carriers, would involve no drain on Canadian manpower additional to that involved in the present Naval programme; and

 b) that the proposals regarding aircraft carriers be referred to the Ministers of National Defence for Naval Services and for Air for examination and joint report to the War Committee."

Regarding these August and September events which included a visit of Captain R.H.V. Buxton, RN (Chief of Combined Operations Bases, Western Approaches) to NSHQ just prior to the "Quadrant" Conference, the Canadian naval historian G.N. Tucker would remark some nine years afterwards:

The Canadian Naval Staff was thus able to examine its own resources and meet many of the proposals made by the British authorities at the First Quebec Conference. At this conference the Canadian Chief of the Naval Staff and the Directors of Plans and Naval Personnel met their "opposite numbers" in the Admiralty, and in several discussions arrived at a series of proposals which would help to ease the Admiralty's problem [viz. manpower shortage], and at the same time give Canadian personnel wider experience and a chance to gain prestige in other fields of naval warfare. The manning of the two "V"-class fleet destroyers (later named Algonquin and Sioux), and two flotillas of coastal craft, infiltration into H.M. cruisers to train personnel for manning two H.M.C. cruisers later on, the manning of three flotillas of landing craft for use in "Operation Neptune", the establishment of a beach commando for the same Operation, and the provision of ten CW officer candidates a month for training and subsequent loan to the R.N., were all agreed upon, and the manning of two escort carriers and a training cruiser was discussed.

The proposals were then put into the hands of the British Prime Minister who personally requested Mackenzie King to lend the necessary personnel.[20]

Section 2 Personnel appointments

With authorization to establish RCN Beach Commando "W" now achieved, selection and appointment of volunteers could proceed. Having a complement of twelve officers and seventy-two ratings, the Commando's organizational structure would be:

Principal Beach Master (PBM)
Deputy Principal Beach Master (D/PBM)
Administration and Stores Officer

W-1 Beach Party	W-2 Beach Party	W-3 Beach Party
Beach Master (BM)	Beach Master (BM)	Beach Master (BM)
2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)	2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)	2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)
2 Petty Officers (POs)	2 Petty Officers (POs)	2 Petty Officers (POs)
2 Leading Seamen (L/S)	2 Leading Seamen (L/S)	2 Leading Seamen (L/S)
6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)	6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)	6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)
14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)	14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)	14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)

N.B. An extra OD might be added as body guard and messenger for the PBM.

Although the D/PBM subsequently acquired the additional title of Commanding Officer (C.O.), the PBM still retained overall authority. The PBM and, upon becoming C.O., the D/PBM were Acting Lieutenant-Commanders, while the Administration and Stores Officer, the 3 BMs and eventually all 6 ABMs held Lieutenant rank. Organized originally with 6 POs and 6 L/S, the actual number for each of these varied from time to time; and while authorized at the outset to carry 18 ABs and 42 ODs, the Commando ended up having virtually no ratings in the latter category.

On Sept. 5 SCNO(L) recommended the appointment of Acting Lt. Cdr. R.B. Wadsworth, RCNVR, as Staff Officer, Combined Operations (SO(CO)) to the Director of Warfare and Training (DWT) at NSHQ.[21] Serving at the time in the Mediterranean and having worked previously in Combined Operations with W.S. Brooke, Wadsworth would take over the Ottawa post on Dec. 14 after spending November visiting Combined Operations headquarters and several bases in UK.[22]

In his Sept. 14 secret memorandum to SCNO(L), the Naval Board Secretary announced the Cabinet War Committee's agreement to provide manpower for one Beach Commando and three major landing craft flotillas to serve with the Royal Navy in Combined Operations as wholly Canadian-manned units.[23] This "fresh commitment" included the proviso that sufficient personnel for the Beach Commando and for one of the three flotillas would be sent overseas as soon as possible.[24]

On the same day, NSHQ issued a general distribution Naval Message requesting "medically fit" volunteers for these two parts of Canada's expanded participation in Combined Operations, with "preference of selection ... given to those who through no fault of their own have spent a considerable period ashore".[25] The "medically fit" stipulation likely derives from remarks contained in a Dec. 31, 1942, letter to CCCS from *HMCS Niobe's Senior Medical Officer (SMO) who referred to the steadily increasing number of Canadian officers and ratings being discharged "medically unfit" for Combined Operations. Accordingly, the SMO recommended from a medical point of view that special attention should be given to the following requirements;[26]

* HMCS Niobe, the Canadian Naval Depot and Manning Pool which occupied the former Smithston Institute premises near Greenock in Scotland, was commissioned on Dec. 15, 1941.[27]

1. under thirty-five years of age;
2. mental stability, with no family history of mental disease or disorder;
3. no history of chronic illness (e.g. bronchitis, asthma, TB, rheumatism, arthritis, heart, ear);
4. standard visual acuity and hearing;
5. free from VD.

On Sept. 17 NOIC, HMCS Hochelaga II in Montreal proposed the name of Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR, to NSHQ as PBM and three days later Lt. Cdr. W.G. Duggan, RCNR, also applied for the position.[28] As we shall see shortly (vide infra, p.13), Macdonald succeeded in gaining the appointment.

SCNO(L) requested the Chief of the Naval Staff on Sept. 26 to have the Beach Party personnel arrive in the UK around the beginning of November if possible "with an aggressive Lieutenant Commander to be Principal Beach Master".[29] Meantime SCNO(L) advised NSHQ on Sept. 24 that he had given SO(CO), W.S. Brooke, Naval Board's Secret Docket N.S. 1037-34-1 which included the Sept. 14 memorandum about the Canadian Government's recent Combined Operations decisions (vide supra, p.9).[30]

On Sept. 27 Secretary, Naval Board sent SCNO(L) a SECRET Memorandum entitled COMBINED OPERATIONS, which outlined arrangements for providing personnel to man the Beach Commando, the First LCI(L) Flotilla and the Squadron Administrative staff.[31] Those of the memorandum's ten paragraphs which affect the Commando are herewith paraphrased:[32]

2. Officers to be volunteers from Canadian sources, except in the case of the flotilla officers and 12 C.O.s from the UK and 3 lieutenants or sub-lieutenants, RCNVR, who have been trained in Combined Operations on Canada's West Coast.[33]

3. 20 volunteer lieutenants or sub-lieutenants, RCNVR, to be appointed to Combined Operations School at Comox, B.C. to maintain the Canadian Navy's commitment and for training to man the Second LCI(L) Flotilla.[34]

4. Substantive ratings for the initial draft to UK for combined operations include 24 Staff positions, 213 for the First Flotilla, and 73 (made up of 6 POs, 6 L/S, 18 ABs and 43 ODs) for the Commando. Total = 310.[35]

5. Among the 310 substantive ratings (vide supra #4) are 8 L/S and 40 ABs or ODs who have received Combined Operations training on the West Coast.[36]

6. Taking into account the number of ratings required for draft to Comox and the number to be drafted from that Base, it shows that a total of 374 volunteers will be needed to carry out the overall arrangements.[37]

7. It is desirable that ratings manning the First Flotilla shall have some knowledge of Signals. "If possible, the Depot is to endeavour to select ratings who have failed the St. Hyacinthe Signal Course."[38]

Parenthetically, it is of interest to note in relation to the foregoing that the Minutes of the Nov. 29 Naval Board meeting (#138) state that[39]

> personnel committed to man three Flotillas of LCI(L), one Beach Party and staff are being provided under the following scheme:
>
> (a) From untrained personnel from Canada (these have already been supplied)
> (b) From ratings trained in the West Coast School
> (c) From Canadian personnel at present serving with Combined Operations in the United Kingdom

Replacements, the Minutes add, are to be provided from the West Coast School.

In an Oct. 4 internal memo, SCNO(L) suggested "W" Commando members be warned that on arrival in Britain they would probably be put into khaki and, upon completion of training, be permanently attached to the Army.[40] A week later SO(CO) advised SCNO(L)'s Staff Officer (Personnel) that he expected the Canadian unit to arrive towards the end of

October and train in HMS Armadillo.[41] On Oct. 26, NSHQ informed SCNO(L) in a "secret" signal that the ratings would arrive before Nov. 5 and the officers on Dec. 1: "It is regretted", the signal concluded, "that officers cannot be sent sooner."[42] Meanwhile, concerning an Oct. 21 query from C.O., HMS Armadillo (Lt. Cdr. E.A. Davis, RN), SCNO(L) requested Capt. Buxton to keep "W" personnel all-Canadian and, if the policy of attaching Beach Commandos to Army Units is continued, to attach "W" to some Canadian Army unit.[43] Buxton's Nov. 23 reply stated in part: "... the question of the allocation of RCN BC "W" is now under consideration."[44]

Captain F.L. Houghton, RCN, who had replaced Cdr. Price as SCNO(L) as of Nov. 5,[45] describes some aspects of what "W" personnel might expect in these words in a Nov. 23 memorandum to C.O., HMCS Niobe:[46]

> ... they are trained for duties on beaches at the time of an assault, dressed in khaki and are attached to an Army unit instead of a ship or naval establishment. The life is strenuous and they are quite exposed to the elements as well as the enemy..... Because of the duties assigned to a beach party the physical standards required is equal to the highest Army standards and even men selected on this basis sometimes lack the necessary stamina.

Most of the ratings selected to join "W" arrived in the United Kingdom from Canada on Oct. 30 and by Nov. 5 a total of seventy-eight (made up of 2 POs, 5 L/S, 23 ABs and 48 ODs) had reported to HMS Armadillo, where S/Lt. J.G. Walker, RCNVR, acted as liaison officer to both SCNO(L) and HMCS Niobe.[47] In order to conform to the authorized number for each substantive category (vide supra, p.8), certain additions and reductions would have to be effected in due course.

The first major indication regarding officer selection for "W" appears in Daily List of Appointments No. 218/43 issued on Oct. 21. In referring to this Daily List, which he enclosed in his Oct. 25 memorandum (on the subject of Combined Operations) to SCNO(L), the Naval Board Secretary notes certain decisions regarding present and future "W" officer appointments, viz.[48]

Paragraph "E"	Assistant Squadron Officer (1 required) Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth, RCNVR
Paragraph "G"	First Lieutenants (12 required) # 6. S/Lt. E.G. Finley, RCNVR
Paragraph "L"	Principal Beach Master (1 required) Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR
Paragraph "M"	Staff Officer for PBM yet to be selected
Paragraph "N"	Beach Masters (3 required) to be selected from "W" after training with RN
Paragraph "O"	Assistant Beach Masters (6 required) to be selected from "W" after training with RN
Paragraph "P"	"W" officers, RCNVR: 1. Lt. J. Bentley; 2. Lt. L.O. Campbell; 3. Lt. R.J. Johnstone; 4. Lt. A.D. Rayburn; 5. Lt. P.A. Bridle; 6. S/Lt. O.H. Rumpel; 7. S/Lt. K.G. Crowhurst; 8. S/Lt. R.I. Shales; 9. S/Lt. F. Angus; 10. S/Lt. G.V.C. Baum.
Paragraph "Q"	First Lieutenants (20 required). Appointed HMCS Givenchy III for training for Second LCI(L) Flotilla. #15. S/Lt. J.B. Cronin, RCNVR

Notwithstanding the information contained in Paragraph "L" and Paragraph "P", HMCS Niobe advised HMS Armadillo on Oct. 26 that the names of the officers forming RCN Commando were not yet known but such information would be communicated immediately it became available and that the Party's senior officer would telephone to the Ardentinny base upon arrival in UK.[49]

On Nov. 25 Combined HQ for C-in-C Canadian North-West Atlantic signalled HMCS Niobe and SCNO(L) that the following officers had embarked that morning in HMT Mauretania at Halifax for passage to UK and service in Combined Operations:[50]

Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald; Lts. A.D. Rayburn, J. Bentley, C. Hatch, N.W. Gooderham, R.J. Johnstone, L.O. Campbell, L.S. Kyle, J.B.B. Shaw, O.H. Rumpel; Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth; S/Lts. F. Angus, R.I. Shales, G.V.C. Baum, K.G. Crowhurst, E.G. Finley.

Before all "W" officers began their formal training, several personnel changes had already occurred, viz.:

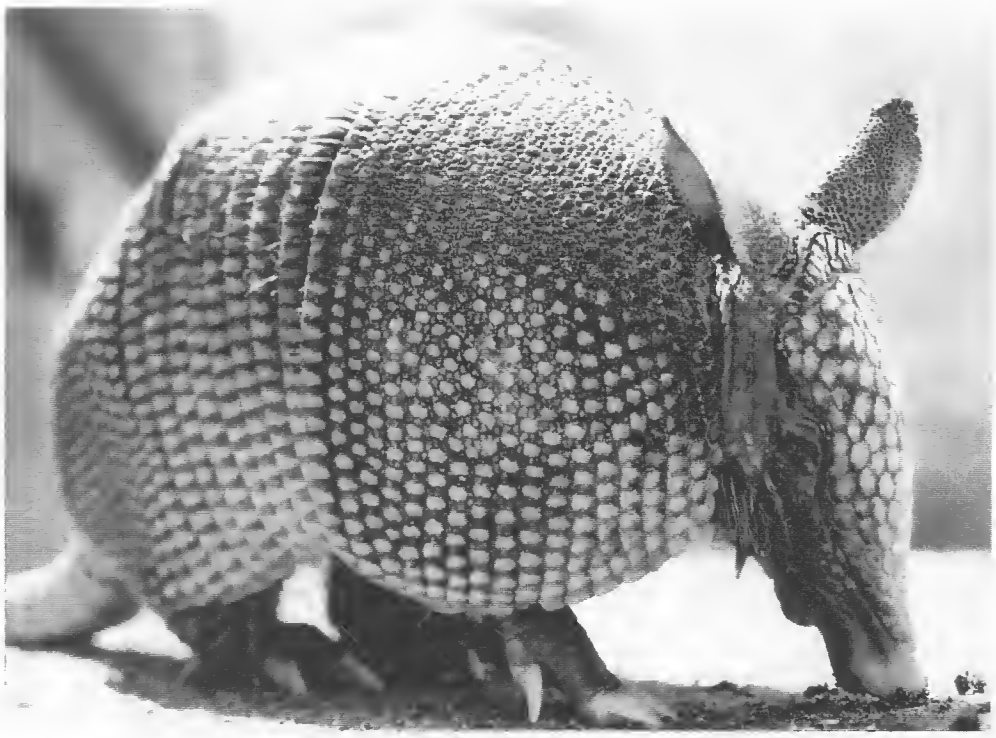
1. Bridle was apparently reappointed elsewhere.

2. Macbeth and Finley, both of whom had been originally assigned to LCI(L)s, joined "W" as replacements for Baum and Rumpel who transferred to a Canadian LCI(L) flotilla.[51]

3. Lt. D.M. Sutherland, First Lieutenant in HMCS Niobe, came to "W" on Nov. 23.[52]

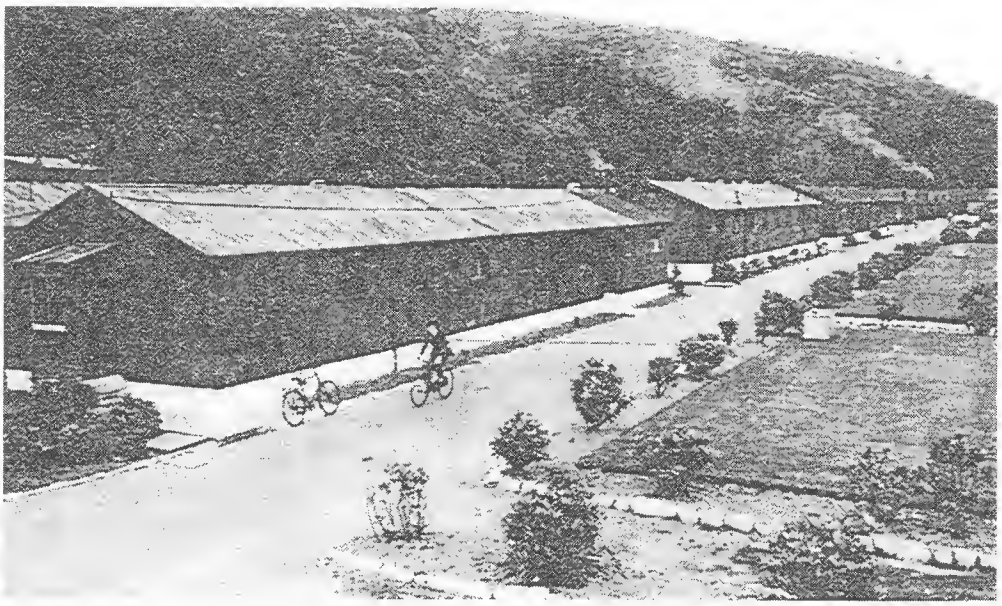
By Dec. 6, when the full officer complement had reported to HMS Armadillo, it was disposed as follows:

PBM	Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald
D/PBM . . .	Lt. R.J. Johnstone
BMs	Lt. D.M. Sutherland (W-1)
	Lt. C. Hatch (W-2)
	Lt. L.O. Campbell (W-3)
ABMs	Lt. E.G. Finley and S/Lt. K.G. Crowhurst (W-1)
	Lt. A.D. Rayburn and S/Lt. R.I. Shales (W-2)
	Lt. J.K. Macbeth and S/Lt. F. Angus (W-3)
Spare	Lt. J. Bentley (acting Administration officer)



HMS ARMADILLO
ARDENTINNY, ARGYLL
SCOTLAND

HMS Armadillo



Parade Ground

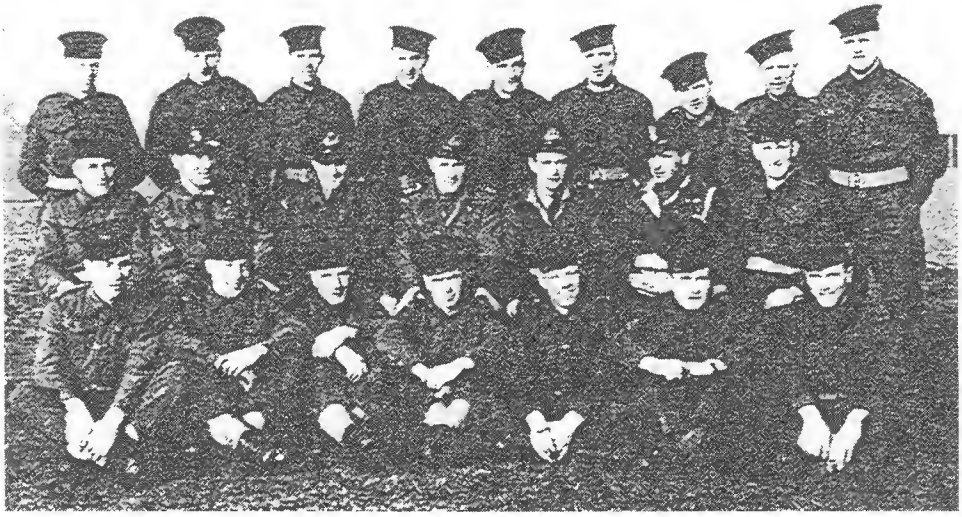


Beach & Jetty

HMS Armadillo



Wardroom



RN Beach Commando "C"

The following ten pages of photographs, taken by Lt. Gilbert A. "Gibby" Milne, RCNVR (pictured below), show various aspects of the training which "W" underwent while stationed at HMS Armadillo in Scotland from November 1943 until mid-February 1944.



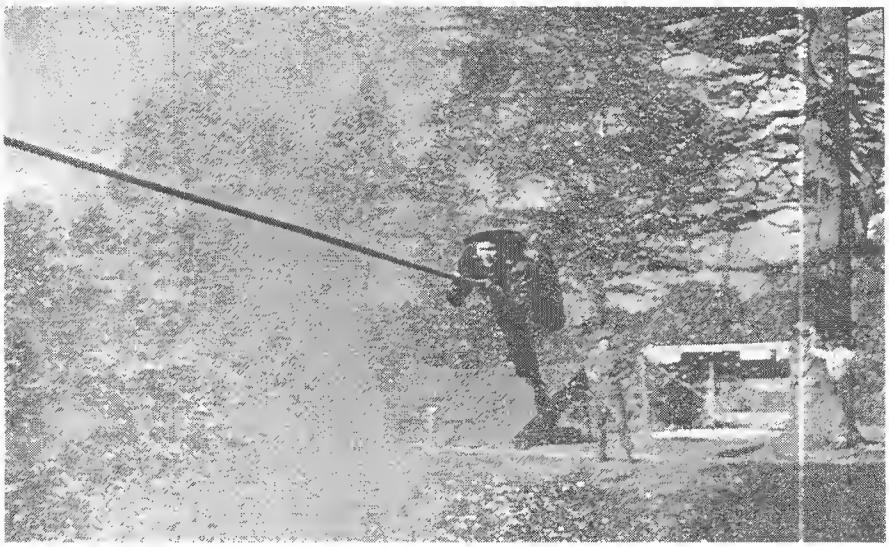
ASSAULT COURSE TRAINING



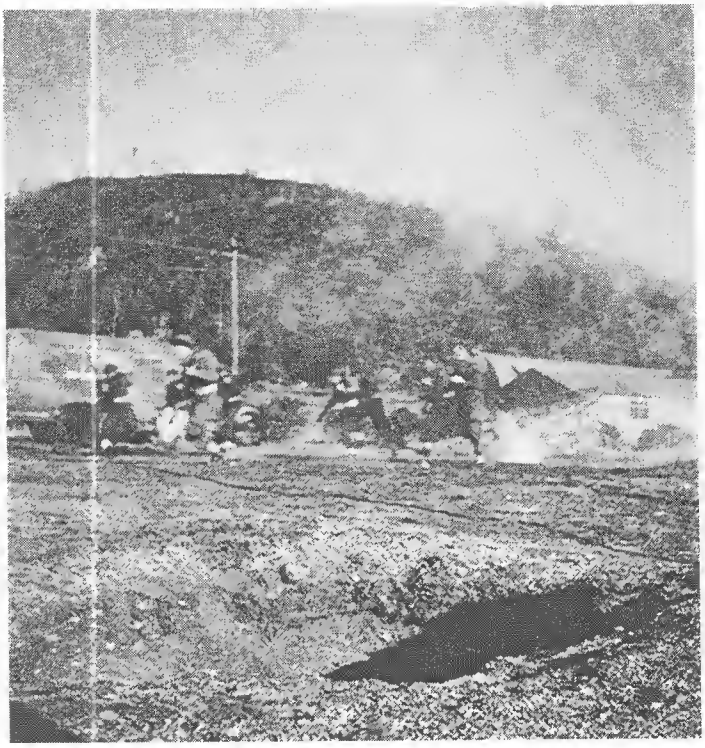


Traversing a Ravine





Along the "Death Slide"



From Open Ground



Into a Shell Hole



Charging Ahead



Up and Over





Unarmed Combat



Left: J. Skinner; Right: J. Joyce



Left: H.D. Smith; Right: F.C. Albrechtson

Route March in the Scottish Hills



W-2 Beach Party



Camouflaging Steel Helmets



L/R: R. Barnes, D. Kennedy, W.A. Burden, D. McIntyre



D.W. Smiley - Cliff Climbing







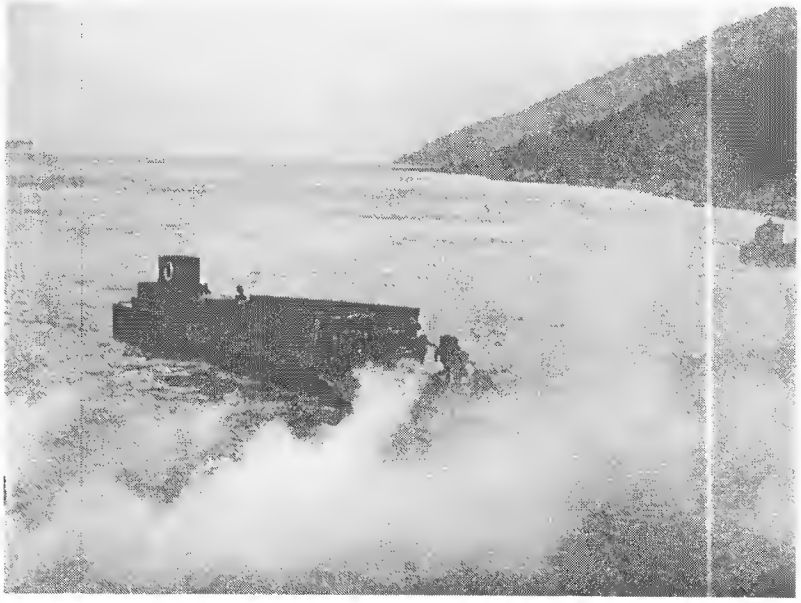
Using Rope Ladders to Scale a Rock Face





**LCMs Beaching*





**LCM = Landing Craft Mechanized*



Beach Commandos storm ashore







Setting Up a Communications Site

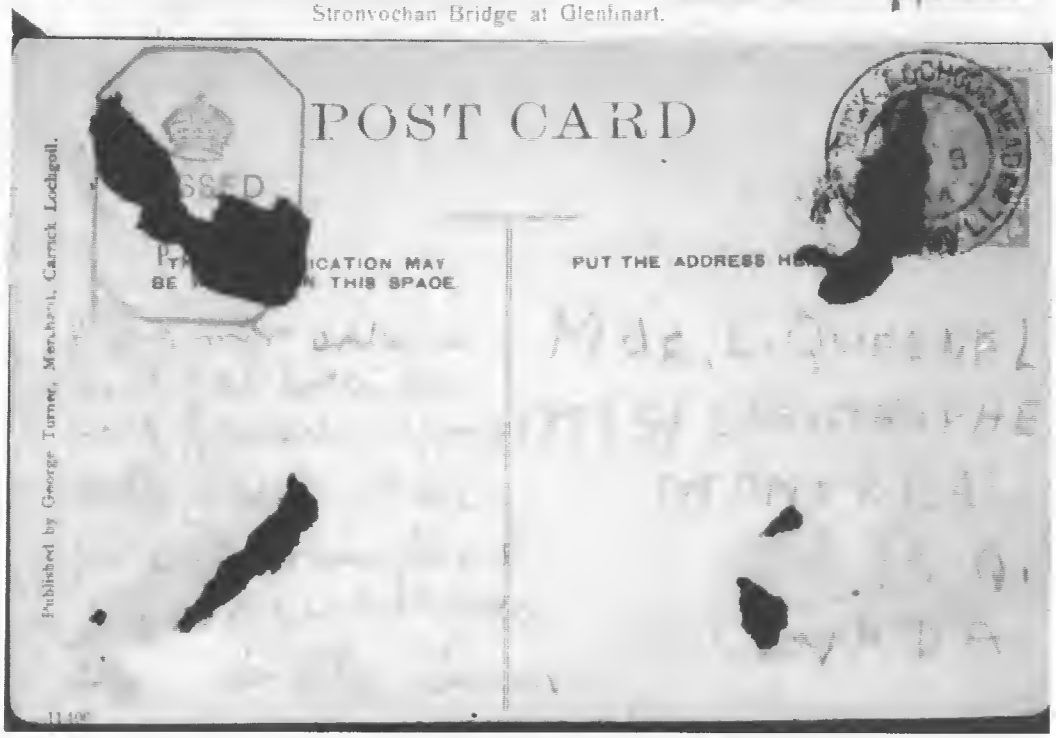


Heading for Higher Ground





Stronvochan Bridge at Glenfinart.



Above are both sides of a postcard postmarked Lochgoilhead, Argyll, sent by Lucien Quesnel early in 1944 to his mother in Montreal when "W" Beach Commando was training in HMS Armadillo at Ardentinny. The communication part reads:

> "Dans mon entraînement j'ai sotté de pont plusieurs fois. Cette place est où je suis maintenant. C'est une très belle place.
> [Je suis ton] fils Lucien."

Section 3 HMS Armadillo -- November 5, 1943 to February 16, 1944

Before proceeding with an account of the training activities which "W" underwent during its fifteen-week attachment to HMS Armadillo, certain "house-keeping" matters will receive attention.

Located at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Argyll, Scotland, HMS Armadillo's main building (known as Glenfinart House) comprised an early 19th century Tudor-style manor house to which was added a 3-storey Georgian-type tower around 1895. The composite structure doubled as officers' quarters and wardroom, while a score of temporary huts accommodated staff and trainees. The extensive grounds, nearby beaches, and surrounding hills provided ideal natural settings for the task at hand. HMS Armadillo had been commissioned in 1942 as the main combined operations base for Beach Party (subsequently renamed Beach Commando) training. "W" constituted the last of twenty-two such units, many of which were established and trained elsewhere, and had seen or would see action in various war theatres, including North Africa, Italy, Southeast Asia, Dieppe and, of course, Normandy. Being entirely Canadian-manned, RCN Beach Commando "W" represented the only non-RN Beach Commando.

Combined operations allowance. SCNO(L) recommended to NSHQ on Nov. 17, 1943, that "W" officers and ratings be paid the allowance at RN rates and two days later informed C.O., HMS Armadillo that such a payment was under consideration.[53] Paragraph #20 of the "Progress report and survey of position as of 19th January 1944", which was prepared by SCNO(L) staff and enclosed in SCNO(L)'s RCN -- Combined Operations Activities memorandum of Jan. 27 to NSHQ, notes that NSHQ had already been requested to approve

the allowance "as a form of Hard-Lying Money".[54] On Jan. 31 SCNO(L) told PBM "W" that, in accordance with Naval Order 3313, the Combined Operations allowance may be paid as for the RN.[55] The matter dragged on for almost six months[56]; then, towards the end of June, "W" first heard that on May 9 NSHQ had informed SCNO(L) of official approval for "hard lying money when embarked" and "field allowance in lieu of hard lying when on exercises or operations."[57] It is interesting to learn that the RN hard lying per diem rates at the time were: one shilling and six pence for lieutenants and above; one shilling for sub-lieutenants and below; and six pence for ratings.[58]

Flashes and badges. In anticipation of the arrival of the Canadian Beach Commando, Lt. Cdr. E.A. Davis, RN (C.O., HMS Armadillo) requested SCNO(L) on Oct. 20, 1943, to provide 200 pairs of "Canada" flashes to be worn on khaki battle dress[59] and five days later SO(CO) advised his superior that HMCS Niobe would look after this request.[60] The same day Rear-Admiral H.E. Horan, RN, Commander Commanding Combined Operations Bases, Western Approaches (RACCCOB,WA) proposed to Davis that the "Canada" flash be worn below the "RN Commando" flash on battle dress.[61] SCNO(L) reacted to this proposal by suggesting three guidelines to Davis on Nov. 19:[62]

1. Officers will wear "Canada" flashes in gold with navy blue background on their blue and khaki uniforms, and in blue with white background on their white uniforms.

2. Ratings will be issued six "Canada" flashes in red with navy blue background and four in blue with white background.

3. The "Commando" (and not the "RN Commando") flash will be worn below the "Canada" flash. The "RN" part is to be eliminated.

On Nov. 26 SCNO(L) recommended that all Canadian naval combined Operations personnel wear the *Combined Operations badge below the "Commando" flash which in turn would be below the "Canada" flash.

Referring to their telephone conversation earlier in the day, S/Lt. Walker wrote to SO(CO) on Dec. 2 enclosing for consideration and approval a sample "Commando" flash, red on blue, with 3/8-inch lettering and colours similar to the "Canada" flashes issued gratis to Canadian ratings in accordance with Naval Order 3083.[63] The "Commando" flash would be worn below the "Canada" flash on each arm of jackets and greatcoats.[64]

On Dec. 4 SO(CO) told PBM Macdonald that he was authorized to proceed with securing the "Commando" flashes if he approved Walker's sample; but he also reminded the PBM that HMCS Niobe had no authority to either purchase or gratuitously issue them.[65] However, "if Armadillo is prepared to issue these badges to the ratings and officers in the ordinary way", SO(CO) adds, "that is satisfactory".[66] In his Dec. 14 response to SO(CO), Macdonald points out that while HMCS Niobe was in a position to immediately issue the sample "Commando" flash,

> It is, however, considered that these badges should be adopted only temporarily and it is requested that action may be taken to obtain approval for the acquisition of a new type badge, woven in the same manner as the "Canada" badges; the "Commando" badge now available will have a very poor appearance when worn with the standard "Canada" badge.[67]

The PBM concludes by writing: "I would appreciate your assistance in this connection".[68]

* The Combined Operations badge, which was circular in shape, depicts a bird (air force) at the top and, below it, a bren gun (army), both superimposed across the shank of an anchor (navy). The bird, bren gun and anchor are red in colour and the background is black.

In the margin of Macdonald's memorandum to SO(CO), which is marked "Rec'd Dec. 16", there are two pencilled notations (probably written by SO(CO)):[69]

> Personally I think the reverse of Lt. Cdr. Macdonald's suggestion would be better, viz. have "Canada" badges woven to match the "Commando" badge
>
> Await Macdonald's visit

The second notation, which refers to the forthcoming Dec. 21 PBM-SO(CO) meeting, does not concern us for the moment.[70]

Meanwhile on Dec. 13 Pay-Cdr. Pennington, RCNVR, on behalf of SCNO(L) replied to RACCCOB,WA's request of the previous week by concurring in the sample "Commando" flash forwarded on Dec. 2 by C.O., HMS Armadillo.[71]

In a Dec. 22 communiqué to C.O., HMS Armadillo signed by Capt. A.B. Fanshawe, RN, on behalf of RACCCOB, Western Approaches Command, who was on leave, official approval is finally announced of the proposals regarding the issue of "Commando" flashes contained in Armadillo's letter (No. 2658/30) of Dec. 2 and recorded in RACCCOB's minute No. C.30/2563F dated Dec. 7.[72]

Paragraphs #15 and #16 of SCNO(L)'s Jan. 31, 1944, memo to PBM "W" summarize the authoritative situation with respect to flashes and badges. The former, which is entitled "Shoulder flashes", states that whereas the prefix "RN" is not appropriate, approval is given by Naval Order 3286 to wear the "Canada" badge and, below it, the word "Commando" in red letters on navy blue background.[73] Paragraph #16, which is entitled Combined Operations badge, begins by declaring that Canada's naval combined operations are being conducted as far as possible on general service lines, and then adds that although there is

> no objection, however, to those serving in "W" wearing the Combined Operations badge while so attached,... the wearing or not of this badge must be determined by the PBM for "W" as a whole[74]

and the decision must be communicated to SCNO(L). On Feb. 22 the PBM advised SCNO(L) that all "W" personnel would henceforth wear the Combined Operations badge on battle dress.[75]

Macbeth escapade. Appointed originally to Combined Operations as Assistant Squadron Officer for Canadian LCI(L)s, Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth transferred to "W" as additional officer on Dec. 15 and eventually became an ABM in "W"-2.[76] Shortly later, as we read in SO(CO)'s Jan. 27, 1944, memo to SCNO(L), he apparently transgressed King's Rules and Admiralty Instructions:"

> It is believed that about Christmas or New Year's, the Boat Officer (HMS Armadillo), who is not a Canadian officer, took a landing craft without permission and was absent from the base for thirty-six or more hours. Accompanying him, I understand, were two Canadian officers. One may have been Lt. MacBeth [sic], RCNVR. These officers were merely attached for training and may have been technically on leave at the time the event took place. It is probable that the officers in question will be court martialled, and this may be mentioned.[77]

Referring to the Canadian Commando's imminent departure for southern England and according to instructions received from RACCCOB,WA, Lt. Cdr. Davis advised Captain *G.J.3 in a secret memo dated Feb. 14 that three "W" ABMs (Lt. J.K. Macbeth, Lt. A.D. Rayburn and S/Lt. F. Angus) would "be retained in HMS Armadillo in connection with a

* G.J.3 refers to Naval Assault Group J-3 to which RCN Beach Commando "W" had recently been attached. Four such Groups (J-1, J-2, J-3, and J-4) formed Naval Assault Force J, which had responsibility for landing Allied armies on Juno Sector beaches during the invasion of Normandy six months later. Similarly, four other Naval Assault Forces (S, G, O, and U), which were used for the Normandy landings, had responsibility for Sword, Gold, Omaha, and Utah Sector beaches respectively.

Disciplinary Court to be held within seven days probably.[78] If so requested Rayburn would act as "prisoner's friend" to Macbeth or Angus, the two charged Canadian officers. While both Angus and the Boat Officer (S/Lt. Mortimer RNVR) were subsequently exonerated, Macbeth lost six month's seniority, received a "severe" reprimand, and was "required on board" for an indefinite period. His only consolation came in the wardroom after the case was closed when the President of the Court bought him a double rum for having successfully evaded the flotilla of harbour craft sent out to intercept the LCM gallivanting around Loch Long and the River Clyde.[79]

PBM replaced*. As already noted (vide supra, p.13), the appointment of Macdonald as PBM of the RCN Beach Commando took effect within five weeks of his name being submitted to NSHQ on Sept. 17.[80] Despite this, on Dec. 10 SCNO(L) sent the Secretary of the Naval Board a Dec. 1 Daily Appointment List showing Lt. Cdr. Macdonald appointed to "Niobe add'l "W" as PBM".[81] Macdonald's arrival at the Combined Operations training base in Ardentinny is evidenced by Armadillo's Dec. 3 communication to SCNO(L), viz.:

> Drifter Golden Line will be at Gourock Pier Sunday 5th December to embark 11 officers for "W" Commando. (Macdonald + 10 others). ETA 1153[82]

Beyond his involvement with the "flashes and badges" matter already described, the PBM indicated more relevant problems in a Dec. 14 memo to SO(CO):

> Dear Brooke, Thank you for your letter of December 6 (ref. CS.5-B-44).

*For additional relevant documents concerning this matter, see Appendix VI.

> Things here are proceeding reasonably well and all the officers are very keen about this undertaking. We will not, however, expect to fully settle down until such time as we proceed as a unit to the base to which we are to be attached.....
>
> I understand that on the 21st or 22nd December the whole of the Canadian unit is to proceed on leave, returning on 2nd January, and that on our return we will take over the actual command of the unit and proceed with an additional week's training. I am strongly of the view that the sooner we can complete the programme here and proceed to our own base to continue our training, it will be better for all concerned. The situation as it exists presents many difficulties and it is quite impossible to understand just where to begin.
>
> Yours sincerely W.M. Macdonald.[83]

The same day it so happened that SCNO(L) requested C.O., HMS Armadillo to have Macdonald attend a conference at 10 Haymarket in London on Dec. 17 or any convenient date thereafter.[84]

The PBM actually reported to SCNO(L) on Dec. 21, just as "W" was about to proceed on two weeks leave over Christmas and into the New Year.[85] Without any official record to indicate what did transpire at the conference, one can but assume that the decision to relieve Macdonald as PBM had already been made some time previously. In any case, the day after the conference, Macdonald was appointed first to HMCS Niobe and then to HMCS Stadacona back to Canada on Dec. 27.[86] About a week later SO(CO) notes that Macdonald "failed to get on with the authorities at Armadillo" and was thus removed.[87] Referring to SCNO(L)'s Dec. 22 letter which had indicated Macdonald's unsuitability as a Beach Party officer, NSHQ informed SCNO(L) on Dec. 28 that while no PBM was then available in Canada and Macdonald had been relieved as "CO Beach Party", it was nevertheless urgent to find a Lt. Cdr., preferably under the age of thirty-five, who possessed "high qualifications of physical fitness and leadership."[88]



Cdr. Denis J.P. O'Hagan, RCN(R), GM & bar,
Halifax, 30 August, 1954
(DND Photograph, HS-32511)
(former PBM, RCN Beach Commando "W")

Before turning to events related to the appointment of Macdonald's successor, it is worth noting SO(CO)'s remarks contained in a Jan. 27, 1944, memorandum to SCNO(L):

> There is nothing official or unofficial, but it is believed that in the period 5th December to 22nd December, 1943, when the Canadian officers were first at H.M.S. "ARMADILLO", the authorities were hesitant to enforce observance of regular routine of the base. There seemed to be some mistaken idea that Canadians were not subject to normal regulations. I think that this has now been dissipated, but this "kindness" may have caused the feeling that everything at "Armadillo" was lax.[89]

Prior to his Dec. 23, 1943, appointment as PBM[90] of "W" Commando, Lt. Cdr. Denis James Patrick O'Hagan, RCNVR, had spent considerable time in mine disposal work with the Army where he was awarded the *George Medal and bar. Because of Macdonald's rather sudden "dismissal" and SCNO(L)'s contention that no suitable relief could be found in Canada, and doubtlessly for various other reasons as well, it took until Jan. 28, 1944, for SCNO(L) to request Admiralty to appoint O'Hagan "Niobe additional for Combined Operations effective December 23, 1943".[91]

Following a meeting with Lt. Cdr. D. MacArthur, RNVR (HMS Armadillo's senior training officer) on Jan. 4, 1944, SO(CO) concluded that O'Hagan's suitability would be better known after he had completed a January 4-18 Beach Organization course.[92] (N.B. On Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) an assessment of O'Hagan's performance for the course (vide infra, p.26). In relation to the Jan. 4 meeting, SO(CO) also noted: 1). that the Admiralty had appointed O'Hagan to HMS Armadillo "for PMB with one or other of the parties"; and 2). that [D/PBM] Lt. R.J. Johnstone would make a suitable PBM.[93]

* O'Hagan's George Medal was awarded Jun. 21 and presented Jul. 29, 1941 "for gallantry and devotion to duty"; his bar was awarded Jun. 9 and presented Dec. 3, 1943 "for gallantry and undaunted devotion to duty".

Having been confirmed as "W"'s Principal Beach Master, O'Hagan advised SO(CO) on Jan. 23 that he had tentatively disposed the present complement of officers as follows:[94]

PBM Lt. Cdr. D.J. O'Hagan.		D/PBM Lt. Johnstone	(Lt. Bentley add'l)
W-1	BM Lt. Sutherland.	ABM Lt. Finley.	ABM S/Lt. Crowhurst
W-2	BM Lt. Hatch.	ABM Lt. Rayburn.	ABM Lt. Shailes [sic]
W-3	BM Lt. Campbell.	ABM Lt. Macbeth.	ABM S/Lt. Angus

Training. As already mentioned (vide supra, p.12), a total of seventy-eight "W" ratings reported to HMS Armadillo by Nov. 5, 1943, to commence beach commando training almost a full month prior to the arrival of the unit's twelve officers. Accompanied by C.O., HMCS Niobe (Capt. E.A. Brock, RCNVR), RACCCOB inspected "W" ratings at Ardentinny on Sunday, Dec. 5, just as the Commando officers were beginning to arrive.[95] A week afterwards, SCNO(L) told RACCCOB that the assistance being rendered by the Combined Operations organization in connection with the training of "W" was much appreciated.[96]

In Paragraph 17 of his Jan. 19, 1944, Progress Report dealing with RCN Combined Operations activities, SO(CO) judges the late arrival of "W" officers to have been "rather a handicap".[97] Paragraph 18 and Paragraph 19 of the same report, which SCNO(L) sent to NSHQ on Jan. 27, contain the following respective observations:

> 1. The ... officers are more or less suitable but not markedly so, due mainly to age and seniority. Due to the nature of their employment, it is customary to attach quite young and active officers to the Beach Parties.[98]
>
> 2. Reports indicate that the men assigned by RCN Sub Depot, "Niobe", have shown up well in training.[99]

The first observation echoes information sent a little earlier from SCNO(L) implying that the "Canadian officers ("W") are rather older than is generally customary in RN Beach

Commandos."[100] The second seems somewhat at odds with C.O., HMS Armadillo's Dec. 17 statement, viz.:

> ... all ["W"] Able Seamen failed very badly in their [Leading Seaman] examination. These men were utterly inexperienced and should never have been recommended to sit the exam. This may have been due to the lack of experience of Sub-Lieutenant Walker.[101]

The PBM's view on these various matters are expressed in his final report of Aug. 31, 1944. Noting that because of their "late arrival" the officers had consequently been unable to take complete charge of their men and beach parties, the PBM states:

> I consider that it would have been preferable to have trained the officers first and then let them train the men under the supervision of Armadillo training staff.[102]

While crediting HMS Armadillo with providing a good assault course, general "toughening", and access both to several Combined Operations *pamphlets issued by HMSO and also to the beachmaster accounts of the recent Allied landings in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, the PBM questions the adequacy of the base's total inventory of three **LCMs and six ***LCV(P)s for training in beaching and unbeaching landing craft.[103]

On Mar. 9 or 10 SCNO(L) informed NSHQ that a Canadian Naval Commando story, passed by Admiralty censors, was being "forwarded today via bomber. 112 pix following."[104] Written and with pictures taken by naval photographer Lt. G.A. Milne, RCNVR, this story about "W"'s training at HMS Armadillo was subsequently featured in the Saturday, April 22, 1944 edition of several Canadian newspapers.

* For a list of selected Combined Operations pamphlets, vide APPENDIX I.

** LCM = Landing Craft Mechanized.

*** LCV(P) = Landing Craft Vehicle (Personnel).

Towards the end of 1944 the RCN History Section stationed in London summarized "W"'s initial experience in these words:

> Through December and January to the middle of February, 1944, the R.C.N. Beach Commando trained at H.M.S. "ARMADILLO", Ardentiny [sic], Argyllshire, where they learned the elements of their job of organizing assault beaches, making the discharge of troops, stores and vehicles over the beach head as safe and orderly as possible.[105]

One of only a few practical experiences for "W" officers occurred in February 1944 when Lt. J. Bentley and two other "W" officers were sent on Exercise "Roundabout" to observe unloading of stores on to beaches.[106] Bentley, who at the time was assistant to the D/PBM and who had sought release from the Commando after being hospitalized for most of January diagnosed with "Vincent Angina", was subsequently made Stores and Administration Officer.[107]

With respect to the performance of the officers who attended the Jan. 4-18 Beach Organization course near Troon in Scotland, on Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) the following extracts of a report from the Chief Instructor, Beach Organization Wing, Combined Training Centre, HMS Dundonald:[108]

> O'Hagan, D.J., Lt. Cdr. Although this officer had had no previous experience in Combined Operations, he had cooperated in the past with the Army. He was, therefore, quick to appreciate the Army problem in Beach Organization and it is considered that he would fit in admirably in a Beach Group.
>
> Johnstone, R.J., Lt. This officer gave the appearance that he considered the military side was outside his sphere. He has a quick brain and, had he applied himself to the subject more strongly, he would have earned a good report.
>
> Campbell, L.O., Lt. This officer worked very hard and showed great keenness. It is thought, however, that he might be loathe to change his views to fit in with the plans of the Beach Company Commander with whom he might have to work.

Sutherland, D.M., Lt. Derived great benefit from the course and assimilated with ease all the information which was given him. He has a very pleasant disposition.

Hatch, C., Lt. Full of common sense, very willing, and took a great deal of interest in the Course.

All of the above officers acquitted themselves very well.

On Mar. 15 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) "Reports on RCNVR officers trained at HMS Armadillo", which may be paraphrased as follows:[109]

O'Hagan, D.J., Lt. Cdr. After overcoming the initial disadvantage of joining a unit which had completed its R.N. Beach Commando training, he asserted himself as a leader in a most satisfactory manner. His extensive knowledge of ships, gear and cargoes should prove useful to him. This officer has submitted a design of a crane to facilitate the discharge of lorries and amphibions.

Johnstone, R.J., Lt. A senior lieutenant of ability and experience who is working well as "Number 1" of the Commando. Quiet and unassuming but a strong-minded and efficient officer.

Campbell, L.O., Lt. Has worked hard to make himself physically fit for the job, but unfortunately had to undergo an operation (and is now in hospital).

Bentley, J., Lt. This officer was under medical treatment for most of the time he was in Armadillo and is probably more suited to a less strenuous branch of the Service.

Hatch, C., Lt. After a very shaky beginning in which he felt that his long sea experience was being wasted, this officer settled down and proved himself to be an efficient and sound Beach Master. It is considered that he should be afforded an opportunity of returning to General Service after the operation.

Sutherland, D.M., Lt. A volunteer for Beach Commandos who has worked hard and has done well in every way both on and off duty.

Rayburn, A.D., Lt. A mature and sound type of officer who has an extensive knowledge of service conditions and of handling men. Cheerful and efficient.

Finley, E.G., Lt. A cheerful and efficient officer who has settled down well in the unfamiliar Beach Commando work. He has a good knowledge of Aircraft Recognition and is an expert Signalman.

Macbeth, J.K., Lt. (n) Is probably wasted in Beach Commandos as it is doubtful if he is strong enough physically for the type of work involved.

Angus, F., S/Lt. A keen and energetic officer, but he requires the firm supervision of a senior officer on and off duty.

Crowhurst, K.G., S/Lt. An exceptionally strong and well-built officer with a very fine power of command. His great ambition is to undergo a course at Whale Island. Arrangements had been made for him to attend a course when the Commando was appointed away from Armadillo. His Senior Officer, however, quite justifiably pointed out that he required to go there least of all.

Shales, R.I., S/Lt. A pleasant young officer who knows how to remain cheerful in all circumstances and to get on with the job.

Immediately following these assessments, the C.O. adds: "The ratings proved themselves to be exceptionally keen and intelligent. They retained their enthusiasm to the end in spite of a long period of training in "Armadillo"".

SCNO(L) sent the PBM an *eighteen-paragraph communication on Jan. 31 requesting confirmation that its contents be read and understood by all officers. Basically it states that the Beach commando, as part of the RCN, is on loan to the RN like any HMC Ship. All personnel are to keep SCNO(L) and HMCS Niobe informed as to their whereabouts at all times and of any ill-health. Regulations are given with respect to the wearing of shoulder flashes and the Combined Operations badge. Regarding military and combined operations, it points out that ""W" will serve with the RN as may seem most expedient and will probably be attached to Force "J"."[111] In a Feb. 22 memo to SCNO(L), the PBM confirms that the Jan. 31 document has been read and understood by all "W" officers.[112]

* In the left margin at the beginning of the eighteen-paragraph communication which was composed by "WSB" (that is, A/Lt. Cdr. W. Saurin Brooke), SCNO(L) has written: "SO(CO). You do these things very well indeed. FLH."[110] (FLH refers to Capt. F.L. Houghton, RCN).

In answer to Admiralty's Feb. 10 request for "date and base for "W" to be signalled [as] the Commando is at present unemployed and its early attachment is most desirable,"[113] Commander Force J replied two days later saying "W" was "accepted now at [HMS] Mastodon and will work under GJ3".[114] This decision bears out SO(CO)'s forecast in his Jan. 19 Progress Report to SCNO(L) that "W" would likely "be sent to Force "J" as the fourth attached Commando, and to some extent may be the spare unit for that Force".[115] In Enclosure A of the report, SO(CO) showed Force J as being divided into:[116]

J-1 (Capt. F.A. Ballance) in HMS Vectis at Cowes;
J-2 (Capt. R.J.O. Otway-Ruthven) in HMS Grasshopper at Weymouth;
J-3 (Capt. A.F. Pugsley) in Lepe House at Beaulieu; and
J-4 (Capt. R.E. Jeffreys) in HMS Squid at Southampton.

Commodore G.N. Oliver was Naval Commander Force J which reported to Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian.

Accordingly, "W"'s *eight officers and seventy-three ratings (together with six tons of baggage) left Scotland on Feb. 16 and headed for their new base and attachment to GJ3 on the south coast of England.[117]

* Lt. Macbeth, Lt. Rayburn, and S/Lt. Angus were detained in connection with a Disciplinary Court (vide supra, p.21). Lt. Campbell and Lt. Bentley were respectively in hospital and on convalescent leave; the latter rejoined "W" on Feb. 18.[118]



HMS MASTODON
EXBURY, HANTS

HMS MASTODON

-- a postwar word from the owner of Exbury Estate --

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Estate Office : Exbury
Near Southampton
SO4 1AZ

Telephone: Fawley (0703) 897181

ELdeR/jjw

1st. March, 1985.

Lt. Cdr. J.K. Macbeth (Ret'd),
218, Maclaren Street ~~#~~ 401,
Ottawa,
Canada K2P OL7

Dear Lt Commander.

Your interesting letter was sent to London when, of course, you really should have addressed it to Exbury where you were stationed during some of your war years.

I was indeed interested to know that you were with 'W' Commando and wonder if, by any chance, you were billeted at Inchmery House and did you know a cousin of mine, George Lane? I was the owner of Exbury House when you were there as my father died in 1942, however, I was serving overseas in North Africa and Italy.

The beautiful gardens which you so well remember have been kept up and last year 92,000 people came to visit them. With this letter comes a brochure and a copy of Our Exbury and I hope this will be a reminder of some of the happier days you spent at Exbury.

Yours sincerely,

Edmund de Rothschild

Edmund de Rothschild.

Section 4 HMS Mastodon -- February 17 to April 3, 1944

Location of HMS Mastodon was in Exbury on the 250-acre Rothschild estate bounded by the Beaulieu River and the New Forest in Hampshire with the officers being billeted in the main building (known as Exbury House).

Personnel. Early in March certain "W" officer personnel and position changes occurred. Following an operation and convalescence Lt. Campbell left the Commando and on May 22 became Canadian Liaison Officer to Force J.[119] He was replaced as W-3 BM by Lt. Hatch whose W-2 BM position was then assigned to W-2 ABM Lt. Rayburn. A new Canadian officer, Lt. H.G. Hampson, RCNVR, who had served with RN Beach Commandos, joined as the second W-2 ABM.[120]

On Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo advised C.O., HMCS Niobe that he considered two "W" ratings, OD Beckman, K. (V.65150) and OD Armstrong, C. (V.61150), unsuitable for beach commando work, the former for medical reasons.[121] With respect to Armstrong, he wrote: "... this rating proved to be dirty, slack and untidy. He showed little interest in his work and had a bad influence on other ratings".[122] Both of them were drafted soon afterwards.

On Feb. 23 HMS Mastodon's Medical Officer informed PBM "W" about OD Tapper, H.: "On account of prolonged and continual disability, I consider this man unfit to continue in Commandos, his training being greatly interfered with on account of his disability."[123] According to "W"'s March monthly report, OD Westerman, L. (V.58750) replaced Tapper in W-3.

"W"'s D/PBM notified HMCS Niobe on Feb. 29 that warrants had been issued against two ratings AWOL for twenty-five hours.[124] Warrant No.1 against AB Joyce, W.F. (V.17772)

of W-3 resulted in a punishment of three days cells and nine days forfeit of both leave and pay: Warrant No.2 against AB *Burden, W.A. (V.43750) of W-2 resulted in a similar sentence but with an additional two days cells.[126]

Around this time the various Beach Commandos and Training Personnel are listed as being disposed as follows:[127]

(1) HMS Armadillo . C, V-2
Inveraray U
HMS St. Matthew V-1
Padstow V-3

(2) Overseas A, D, G, H, K, N, O

(3) Force J HMS Mastodon: P, W
HMS Vectis: L
HMS Cricket: S

(4) Force S F, R, J

(5) Force L E, M

(6) Force G Q, T

(7) Trained Officers:
(i) Training Staff . . Lt. Cdr. D. MacArthur, RNVR
. . . Lt. F.C. Whorrall, RNVR
(ii) Trained Pool . . . (list of 5 S/Lts & 6 Midshipmen)
(iii) Others

With respect to Captain G.J.1's concurrence in granting seven days leave to one party at a time, "W"'s Mar. 16 monthly report remarks:

> Thus, two parties were kept always on hand, so that "W" Commando might participate in an exercise if required. Two-thirds of the Commando has had leave, the remaining third has just gone.[128]

* Burden was discharged from "W" about three months later (vide supra, p.44).[125]

Training. Entitled "GENERAL", the last section of "W"'s Mar. 16 monthly report is worth quoting in full:[129]

> Because Training facilities at "Mastodon" are limited, it is thought advisable to give the men the benefits of as much "outside" training as possible. The Commanding Officer, "Mastodon" and Captain G.J.One have been very helpful in this respect.
>
> "Mastodon's" remoteness from any large town has been a drawback, although the number and calibre of entertainment within the camp has recently improved. Twenty-four hour leave once a week for Officers and ratings has just been approved by the Commanding Officer, "Mastodon". Expendable books have been received from the Staff Officer Special Services and indoor games are being supplied.

On Mar. 3 "W" asked HMS Volcano to provide transport for its party of six arriving three days later at Drigg for a course in land mines, bomb disposal, and booby traps.[130] The next day the PBM informed SCNO(L) that three officers (Lts. Crowhurst, Shales, and Angus, who are ABMs in W-1, W-2, and W-3 respectively) and three ratings (L/S Mcintyre, Jarrett, and Joyce) had been selected to take the course beginning Mar. 7.[131] After returning to Exbury, they presented a series of lectures to the rest of the Commando. In mid-March, Lt. Bentley and about a dozen ratings attended a similar two-week course in land-mine detection and disposal conducted near Southampton by the 128th Company of Army Pioneers.[132]

"W" advised both HMS Excellent and SCNO(L) on Mar. 4 that Lt. Finley would be reporting at 1800 the following day to take a 10-day Aircraft Recognition course.[133] And in reply to "W"'s 031815A/March, HMS Excellent informed the Commando on Mar. 5 that Finley was to be accommodated in HMS Hornet.[134] After completing the course, Finley held several sessions on the subject with "W" personnel during the ensuing two months.

Around this same time, the PBM was in the process of making arrangements with Canadian [Army] Training Schools (CTS) for two ratings from each Party (viz. W-1, W-2,

and W-3) to receive instruction in jeep driving. Also through his efforts, Captain G.J.3 requested C.O., HMS Appledore to offer craft recovery training to as many "W" personnel as possible.[135]

To conclude this section, statements about events which occurred during this period and which appear in the March and April monthly reports respectively will be presented without comment:

> Owing to a lack of training and operational equipment (presumably en route to us) and the absence of certain facilities, Beach Drill has not been featured on the training programmes. The programme has been made up chiefly from the following:- Route marching, Signal Exercises, Rifle and Pistol shooting, Grenade throwing and Aircraft Recognition; and has been supplemented with lectures given by the Beach Masters and Assistant Beach Masters. One Training film in pontoon bridging has been shown. Others on Aircraft Recognition have been made available recently.[136]

> Participation in large-scale exercises was accomplished through the co-operation of G.J.One, the P.B.M. and officers of "P" Commando. Twenty-four ratings (8 from each party), myself [A/Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan] and Lieutenants MacBeth [sic], Angus and Shales took part in Exercise "Gold Braid". Six ratings (two from each party) and Lieutenants Johnstone and Hampson took part in Exercise "Trousers". Lieutenant Hatch and I [O'Hagan] attended Exercise "Prank" as observers.[110]

In order to clarify the matter of "W"'s attachment and role, which continuously caused concern among senior Canadian naval authorities both in Canada and UK, SO(CO) (accompanied by Capt. Godfrey, RCN, C.O., HMCS Prince Henry) spent Mar. 1 and 2 at Force J.1 headquarters in HMS Vectis at Cowes.[137] Although SO(CO)'s Mar. 4 report to SCNO(L) mentions being "courteously received", reassured of "W"'s attachment to Force J, and the visit "well worthwhile", his overall impressions appear in Paragraph 6:[138]

> The "W" Commando is definitely the spare party, and as such will not participate in the major exercises or in any main assault. It is most likely, however, that the party will be required for diversionary assault, such as Salerno or Anzio.

To conclude Section 4, which has described "W"'s six-week stay in HMS Mastodon, we cite the relevant summary appearing in RCN History Section's narrative about the Normandy invasion written December 1944/January 1945;[139]

> There further refinements of training exercises added to the long list of the jobs the Commando knew how to do, from rendering safe beach obstacles, mines and booby traps to policing the beaching and discharge of landing ships and craft of all types. Facilities for training were limited at Beaulieu and after taking part with Force "J" in Exercise "Gold Braid" at the end of March the Commando moved to H.M.S. "LIZARD", Hove, Sussex, on the 3rd April.



HMS LIZARD
HOVE, SUSSEX



CANADIAN NAVAL MISSION OVERSEAS

London, March 1945

While the Canadian naval delegation to London totalled about a dozen at the beginning of 1940, there are over two hundred in this photograph in which the senior officer, Capt. Frank L. Houghton, RCN, can be seen seated just above the word "MISSION" of the caption.

P.S. Behind him in the distant background is a tall leafless tree which almost begs for the picture to be titled "Giant Oaks From Little Acorns Grow".



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C.N.H.O. STAFF PICTURE

	1st Row	2nd Row	3rd Row	4th Row
1.	Capt. Rowe	Marg. Marshall	Isobel Thompson	Helen Henderson
2.	Padre P yke	Marjorie Tingvall	Joice Cain	Dona Tudor
3.	Lieut. Patton	Flora Gibbs	Marj. Burns	Jenny Whitehead
4.	Lieut Richardson	Phyllis Wright	Ann Smith	Phil Andrews
5.	Lieut Day	Vi Pearson	Helen Hall	Ruth Whitehead
6	Lieut. Fry	Olive Heitt	Kay Connelly	Kay Baker
7	Lieut. Hubble	Dorothy Beer	Mary Walker	Rheta Green
8	Lieut. Davis	Vera Skelton	Isobel Whitehead	Doreen Davie
9	Lt.Cdr. Smith	Eileen Ford	Bunty Green	Ken Thompkinson
10	Lt.Cdr. Simcox	Marion Macdonald	May Pilbeam	Bill Hinshelwood
11	Major Webster	Barbara Laurie	Hazel Boyce	Scotty Longthorpe
12	Lt.Cdr. Cooper	Cecil Keefe	Edna Russell	
13.	Lt.Cdr. Gilhooly	Alison Martin	Muriel Perry	Bill Griffin
14.	Lt.Cdr. Sealey	Jean Davidson	Mavis Griffin	Marcel Laferria
15.	Lt.Cdr. Gibbs	Dorothy Hill	Ola Higgs	Lee. Olsen
16.	Lt.Cdr. Pope	Lieut. Mackie	Dorothy Morgan	Charlie Perry
17.	Lt.Cdr. Cleveland	Lieut. Woods	May Dickinson	Kirk
18.	Lt.Cdr. Turnbull	Lieut. Creelman	Betty Wiltshire	Roy
19.	Cdr. McRitchie	Lieut. Buckley	Ruby Corion	Morris White
20.	Cdr. Hill	Sub.Lt. Sprinter	Peggy Marshall	Les Lyon
21.	Cdr. E. Smith	Lieut. Oates	Sheila Fleming	Geo. Campbell
22.	Cdr. Pressey	Lt.Cdr. Macaulay	Pat Martyn	Slim Hoen
23.	Capt. Houghton	Lieut. Leon Shaw	Hilda Carter	Bill Olson
24.	Surg.Capt. Anderson	Lieut. Sullivan	Dorothy Reed	Speakwell
25.	Capt.Pennington	Mr. Hamilton	Betty Robertson	Al. Duguid
26	Cdr. Simpson	Lieut. Lovatt	Peggy Jones	John Bertrand
27.	Cdr. Todd	S/Lt. MacGillicudy	Leah Eaton	Jeff Downey
28.	Padre Foote	Lieut. Carruthers	Stella Norris	Larry Adams
29.	Col. Roop	Lieut. Whitney	Betty Melville	
30.	Lt.Cdr. Brown	Lieut. Henham	Ruby Gibbon	Leo Lawrence
31.	Lt.Cdr. Hamilton	Lieut. Hedgewick	Marj. Sidenius	Jim Heshimmey
32.	Lt.Cdr. Wilcox	Georgina Murray	Jean Griffiths	Butterfield
33.	Lt.Cdr. Southam	Pat Macoun	Molly Prince	J. Iredale
34.	Lieut. Wisner	Helen Booth	Pauline Kirkham	Jack Adams
35.	Lt.Cdr. Thomson	Kay Ross	Dorothy Albery	Cynthia Llewel

37. Lieut. Stake
38. Lieut. Lemieux
39. Lieut. Greening
40. Lieut. Nott
41. Lieut. Kellett
42. W.O. Agnew
43. Lieut. Clark
44. Lieut. Carter
45. Lieut. Beveridge.
46. Capt. Long.

Mary Davies
Marion Phillips
Evelyn Kerr
Sue Joy
Doris Rycroft
Norah Cunningham
Kitty Kelly
Eve Milne
Marj. Warren
Ellen Cameron
Elizabeth Falle
Eleanor Thornton.

Mel Baldwin
Rhoda Clements
Marj. Pyper
Norma Moffat
June Belanger
Norma Montgomery
Evelyn Hanson
Isobel Poliski
Lois Breen

Dot Christie
Chris Blair
Marg. Swinson
Audrey Carter.

5th Row

1. Scrvage
2. Pearson
3. McPherson
4. Ruthie
5. Shipman
6. Claydon

5th Row

7. Harold Groom
8. Ralph Morris
9 Malcom MacDonald
10. Dave Adair
11 Len Walsh
12. Lloyd Otto

5th Row

13. Dick Cuger
14. Hose
15. Carruthers
16 Bruce Cavers
17. Ken Wallacombe
18. Red Pollock

5th Row

19 Durbidge.
20 Pat Hobson
21 Ralph Uttley
22. Sgt. Glenn
23 McIntosh.

Source: This list of names accompanied the March 1945 CNMO Staff picture which, together with a large number of other documents, was donated to the National Archives of Canada in mid-1992 by the Vancouver Branch of the WRCNS

Section 5 HMS Lizard -- April 4 to May 27, 1944

"W" moved from HMS Mastodon in order to make accommodation available to operational LCI(L) flotilla crews and staff.

Personnel. After injuring his shoulder while training and "found unfit for Beach Commandos" on Apr. 27,[140] Lt.(n) Macbeth (ABM in W-3) re-entered General Service. Ten days later he reported to Liverpool for a tactical course and subsequently joined the frigate HMCS Trentonian as navigating officer.[141] By May 20 his ABM W-3 position was filled by Lt. J.B. Cronin, RCNVR, who had been 1st Lieutenant in LCI(L) #250.[142]

Meantime a significant change in the chain of command within each Beach Commando was taking place as a result of Admiralty's Mar. 29 decision to appoint the D/PBM as Commanding Officer (C.O.) with the rank of Acting/Lt. Cdr. and retaining the PBM as overall senior officer.[143] The authorities apparently felt that such an arrangement would enable the PBM to work more effectively with the Army Beach Group commander and the D/PBM with his Beach Commando. In recommending his D/PBM (Lt. Johnstone) for the C.O. position on Apr. 18, the PBM states:[144]

> This officer has carried out his duties as my Executive Officer entirely to my satisfaction and under circumstances that were not always easy. Tact and cheerfulness have been necessary at all times as our position has not always been understood by the RN with whom we have come in contact. He is well liked by his fellow officers and keen to keep up the morale and discipline of the commando.

Then he adds: Professional ability -- 7; Personal qualities -- 7; Leadership -- 6; Intellectual ability -- 7; Administrative ability -- 7. Not until Jun. 6 (D-Day), however, did CNMO inform PBM "W" that "effective June 1st Lt. R.J. Johnstone is appointed Deputy [Principal] Beach

Master and Commanding Officer with Acting rank of Lieutenant-Commander."[145]

Stores and equipment. For three months after leaving HMS Armadillo in mid-February, "W" continuously faced the problem of securing training and operational stores and equipment. The May 20 monthly report indicates somewhat of an improvement in the situation:

> Much of the time spent at HMS "Lizard" has been devoted to the assembling and servicing of Beach Equipment and Operational Gear, (little Training Gear has been obtained thus far). The largest part of the Operational Gear was brought from HMS "Monk" [sic] by railway under the charge of the Stores Officer, Lt. Bentley. It has been augmented by a smaller stock secured through local channels. All of it is stored at a point some distance from HMS "Lizard", but with-in normal range of routine transport. Thus it has been possible for a party to work daily on the sorting and fitting of Operational Stores.[146]

With respect to these variously obtained materials, the PBM noted in his Aug. 31 report that it had enabled "W"'s Stores party to be "put to work to get them in shape for [an] assault landing" and that the party had "made an excellent job of it."[147] Beach drills were subsequently started and the men trained to handle their equipment.[148]

Regarding the whole matter of equipment, the PBM pleaded with SCNO(L) in mid-April for some form of local transportation:

> Although we have had every co-operation, both at "Mastodon" and at "Lizard", in the matter of transport, the strain to which this Service is generally put precludes the use of base vehicles for any but the most important tasks. Thus we are frequently prevented making business visits on schedule. For this reason we also find it extremely difficult to "liaise" with the Army. A jeep, such as other Beach Commando Units possess, would help tremendously.[149]

Reaction to this request appears in the following comment of the Commando's May 20 monthly report: "The loaned jeep has proven extremely useful, especially for short trips

which come up unexpectedly. Heavier transport and transport of a routine nature is still supplied by H.M.S. "Lizard"."[150]

"W" Commando's role. Further to the whole question of the Canadian Beach Commando's attachment to Force J already discussed (vide supra, pp.28 & 33), SO(CO) provides a relevant chronological account of his activities in an Apr. 19 memorandum-to-file:[151]

> April 14. Capt. Hubback, RN, (Chief of Staff to Commodore Force "J") stated: "J" possesses two assault Commandos plus a reserve Commando attached to GJ3; thus "W" was surplus and, while it may be needed for subsequent or diversionary assault, there was no opportunity to use it at the outset or to include it in any of the exercises -- all major exercises had in fact been completed. For this reason, when the two weeks or so with the Canadian Army was completed, it was proposed to return the Commando to Armadillo for furthur training. I told him this was not satisfactory and in my opinion such a move would have a most harmful effect on the personnel and, in addition, they would not be obtaining the necessary experience. He expressed complete willingness to consider my proposed alternatives.
>
> April 17. Lt. Cdr. Juniper, RN, (on ANCXF Staff) frankly admits that:
> 1. "W" was away down on the list of reserve Commandos;
> 2. "W" had been attached to "J" because they felt (and still feel) "J" will ultimately need a fourth Commando;
> 3. "J" had ignored "W" and had failed to include it in any of the assault exercises;
> 4. "J" had in fact proposed discharging the Commando from Force "J".
>
> I told him that Armadillo was an unsatisfactory base in which to keep "W" and, besides, there wasn't room then to accommodate it there. Juniper put the matter to his Senior Officer, Capt. Mansur, RN, who said that if "W" were unavailable it would be necessary to give "J" a fourth Commando in place of "W". Mansur agreed to consult Rear-Admiral Creasey, RN, Chief of Staff to ANCXF.
>
> April 18. Regarding the suggestion to send "W" to Armadillo, I explained to Lt. Carter, RN, (of DCOP, Admiralty) that we could probably arrange to keep "W" training with the Canadian Army for about four weeks, after which we might be contacting him again to see if "W" could be given some Beach Recovery Unit training. Meanwhile, Carter will let me know of any further developments at his end.

In advising SCNO(L) on Apr. 12 that "W" was being looked upon as a "spare" Beach Commando by Force J, SO(CO) recommended that "W" not be so informed.[296] As part of Report No.17 enclosed in his Top Secret Apr. 22 memorandum to NHSQ indicating the steadily growing pressure due to "rapidly-developing invasion plans", SCNO(L) wrote:

> Last week I paid a visit to Brighton where I inspected R.C.N. Beach Commando "W". Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan, G.M., RCNVR has done a good job with his party, and the officers and men appear fit and ready to go. It is unfortunate that, due to the late formation of this Commando, they have been allocated as a "spare unit". I am negotiating with the Admiralty for a more prominent job for them, and have even gone so far to say that unless this can be done it might be preferable to disband them, since it would be most unfair - as well as uneconomical - to work them up to a high pitch of readiness for action and then leave them behind. I anticipate being able to induce A.N.C.X.F. to give them a fair share in the operation.[152]

SCNO(L) may indeed have had some influence because on Apr. 22 ANCXF sent a succinct directive to Force J:[153]

> WRN [sic] Beach Party to remain under your orders and receive all training possible making use of exercise GREENGAGE. This unit will be held in immediate reserve.

A few days afterwards and with reference to "your 26 April", ANCXF advised Force G that:[154]

> "W" which is favourably reported on by Commodore Force J is to replace "Q" Beach Commando. Arrangement for transfer should be made direct with Commodore Force J.

This would seem somewhat contradictory to SCNO(L)'s May 2 signal to NSHQ stating that the date and details of "W" joining Force G are "to be reported".[155] But all is straightened out when, on May 16, CNMO requests NSHQ to cancel the SCNO(L) signal because there had been a lack of opportunity for joint working up between Force G and "W".[156]

To conclude this section, herewith is the essence of SO(CO)'s Apr. 26 message to Capt. C.D. Maud, RN (Senior Training Officer, Force J):[157]

1. Your courtesy in discussing the RCN "W" Commando with Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan and me yesterday is much appreciated.

2. I do not know whether you are aware that it was not Canada's desire to furnish a Beach Party, but it was done at the earnest request of the Admiralty, stipulating that the Party must be kept together and come under RCN administration. The Admiralty's request has resulted in the activities of the Commando being followed at Ottawa with keen interest.

Training. Meanwhile during April and May "W" personnel were taking various courses at Canadian Army Training Schools (CATSs -- also known as CTSs or CTCs) and Canadian Army Reinforcement Units (CARUs) located in southern England:

1. Anti-gas. At #6 CTC Lt. Shales and seventy ratings received a week's instruction in gas and chemical warfare protection and procedures.[158]

2. Battle Tactics. At #5 CTS Lts. Crowhurst, Finley, and Sutherland took two weeks and Lts. Angus and Shales, as well as some seventy ratings, took one week of infantry battle and street fighting instruction.[159] During this fortnight period, the bulk of the Commando bivouacked nearby under canvas.[160]

3. Vehicle Handling. At #2 CARU (Huron Barracks at Bramshott) Lts. Crowhurst, Finley, and Sutherland, together with thirteen ratings, and at #3 CARU (Dettingen Barracks at Deep Cut) Lts. Angus, Hatch, Rayburn, and Shales, along with thirty-five ratings, were given the six-day 2/Drivers 1C/1/3 (M.T.1.) course in which they learned how to operate such types of vehicle as motorcycle, jeep, staff car, station wagon, tracked (bren-gun) carrier, 15-cwt. and 60 cwt. trucks.[159]

4. Mine Detection and Disposal. One officer and ten ratings completed two weeks instruction before "W" departed from HMS Mastodon at the beginning of April.[161]

With respect to "Battle Tactics", the PBM sent an invitation on May 1 to SO(CO):[162]

> [1]. I Enclose herewith a rough draft of the training programme for this week at No.5 Training School. The most interesting event will be the "Battle Course ('Wet')" on Friday morning should Admiral Nelles or others of the London Staff wish to get down for it.
> 2. Thanks for the help with Capt. Maud, RN.

The enclosure outlined the week's schedule:

Monday:	P.T., Signals, Obstacle Course, Route March
Tuesday:	P.T., Review Gas, Signals, Assault Course Dry
Wednesday:	P.T., Signals, Obstacle Course, Range, Route March
Thursday:	P.T., Obstacle Course, Route March, Signals
Friday:	Battle Course Wet

SO(CO) subsequently told the PBM that such a visit, at least for Nelles, was "impossible".

On May 16 the PBM wrote two memos about "Vehicle Handling". In the one to SCNO(L) he began by saying that the fifty-five "W" personnel who completed the course had found "all the officers and instructors ... extremely helpful" and then asked that a letter of thanks be sent to CMHQ.[163] In the other to SO(CO), he wrote:[164]

> Dear Brookes [sic]. Request that you will have a letter written to Lt. Col. Arrenson, the Commanding Officer of No.6 C.T.S., to thank him for the great help he has given us in training the Commando. I have thanked him with wine and song, but if you could make it official [we] would appreciate it. Yours truly.

On the following day SO(CO) composed a draft for Vice-Admiral Nelles' signature. Addressed to Arrenson personally, c/o CMHQ (London), the letter first refers to the PBM's recent report which mentioned the "very great assistance which you have rendered in connection with the development of the Commando recently" and then concludes: "May I take this opportunity of expressing to you my appreciation for your co-operation. Yours truly."[165] Referring to their May 2 / May 4 exchange of correspondence on the desirability

and setting up of vehicle handling instruction, CNMO signalled CMHQ as follows on May 26: "PBM reports driver refresher course was most helpful, and it is desired to so express Mission's appreciation on record."[166] Finally we might note here that in his August 31 report the PBM stated that the vehicle handling course proved to have been "extremely useful".[167]

In Paragraph #6 of his twelve-paragraph comprehensive minute of April 12 to SCNO(L) about "W", SO(CO) implicitly praises the PBM for being successful in making the necessary arrangements with the Canadian Army for "W" to take these several training courses; and, in Paragraph #7, he pleads for the PBM to be congratulated for such initiatives.[168]

Two other ways of preparing "W" personnel during these months are mentioned in official records:

1. Five officers "had brief lectures and a practical test in the use of the Davis Diving Helmet."[169]
2. SCNO(L) requested the Canadian LCI(L) squadron to assist "W" "in obtaining use of gunnery and other facilities required to extent possible."[170]

Meanwhile, in relation to another vital aspect of "W"'s efficacy as an operational commando, the April 20 monthly report declares:[173]

> Of the equipment specified for use of Beach Parties in Combined Operations Pamphlet 17, only Beach Lights and signs have been delivered. Because of the lack of gear it has been necessary in some cases to demand locally or to borrow from whatever source we could in order to make up the deficit.

Before concluding Section 5, a brief account will be given concerning "W"'s complement of Petty Officers (POs) and Leading Seamen (L/S). Ever since being initially staffed with two POs and five L/S, the Commando had experienced difficulty in securing the authorized number of six for each category.[171] It will be recalled (vide supra, p.25) that back in December 1943 all the "W" ABs who took the Combined Operations Leading Seaman course

in HMS Armadillo had failed the examination. On Mar. 19, 1944, HMCS Niobe recommended to NSHQ that approval be given to the PBM's request for permission to promote ratings from within the Commando where possible.[172] "On arriving at [HMS] Lizard," the PBM noted in his April 20 monthly report,

> it was decided to avail ourselves of the Training Staff facilities here with a view toward earmarking potential Leading Seamen, at the same time giving all ratings a "brushing up" in seamanship, gunnery, signals, etc. Two weeks of this training has been completed.[173]

HMCS Niobe was subsequently advised on May 12 that after taking a three-week course, "all ten" ABs passed the Leading Seaman exam and one L/S qualified as PO.[174] Ten days later SO(CO) asked NAPERS to grant if possible "W"'s May 17 (WLO 11) request to advance ratings from within.[175]

In any event, when the Commando landed in Normandy at the end of the first week of July, by which time authorization had been given for six POs and eight L/S, "W"'s Nominal List showed one PO, three Acting POs and nine Acting L/S.[176]

Concerning "W"'s two-month stay in and around HMS Lizard, the London-based RCN History Section made these comments at the end of 1944:[177]

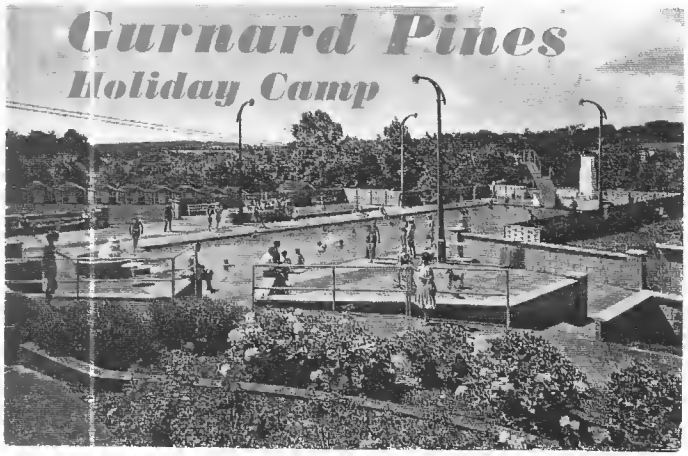
> From there courses with Canadian Army Battle Schools were arranged but no complete training or assault work was possible since full beach equipment had not arrived and a beach signals section had yet to be allocated to the Commando. This was because the Commando was not slated for the assault but was a spare for Force "J". There were, in fact, more trained Beach Commandos ready for the invasion than there were assault beaches.

On May 28 "W" personnel, equipment, and stores moved from HMS Lizard to HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) on the Isle of Wight.[178] Under the heading of Change of Address in the Commando's June 19 monthly report, we read: "Six 3-ton lorries and two single-deck buses were used in travelling from Hove to Southampton, when the gear had to be transferred to Ferry for transport to Cowes."[179]

HMS *VECTIS (PINES CAMP)
Cowes, Isle of Wight

*Vectis was name given by the Romans to the Isle of Wight







These premises, situated on a well-wooded, sixty-acre site and operated in peace-time as Gurnard Pines Holiday Camp, were demolished during the 1970s preparatory to a housing development.

Section 6 HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) -- May 28 to July 7, 1944

Personnel. In the process of moving to HMS Vectis, "W" received orders for Lt. Hatch (W-3 BM) to report on May 29 to CNMO from where he was appointed shortly afterwards to Canadian MTB #460.[180] Lt. Angus, as "senior A.B.M. of W-3 and its most devoted mentor", became W-3 BM, being replaced as W-3 ABM by Lt. J. Vaillancourt, RCNVR, who left Canadian MTB #743.[181]

Upon request towards the end of June, Lt. J.R. Cunningham, RCNVR, left the convoy escort service and replaced Lt. Shales (W-2 ABM) who was hospitalized as a result of breaking both heels.[182] Although Shales never rejoined "W", he eventually returned to General Service as Asdic Officer in a Canadian frigate. After being only ten days with the Commando, Cunningham received appointment as spare officer with the 29th Canadian MTB flotilla. To fill the vacant W-2 ABM position, Lt. C.B. Christie arrived on July 6, the very day that RCN Beach Commando "W" was embarking for passage to the Normandy beaches.[183]

Within "W"'s three respective Beach Parties, certain personnel changes among the ratings occurred during this period:[184]

W-1. PO G. Winn left by request (partly his and partly ours).

AB J. Skinner was forced to leave on account of illness.

Replacements, ABs H. Murray and N. Knight, came from HMCS Niobe via HMS Armadillo.

W-2. AB W.A. Burden, who "climaxed a long and unhappily eventful career with a discharge to NIOBE", was replaced by AB E. Woodall.

W-3. AB M. Fleming replaced "assault course casualty" OD F. Gamblin.[185]

AB H. Byers left "upon the granting of his request to go back to Landing Craft" and was replaced by AB D. Murphy.

Under the heading of New Rates, the June 19 monthly report gives further information about various "W" ratings:[186]

> On top of the vacancies for higher rates already existing, two more were created during the month, by reversion to general service of PO G. Winn and by the disrating of A/L.S. G. Madden. The disrating of G. Madden followed his appearance as a Defaulter before the Maintenance Captain, H.M.S. Vectis. To bring the complement up to strength, the following were created Acting Leading Seamen (Comb. Ops.) to date May 12, 1944: Able Seamen D. Smiley, J. Playtouw, J. Joyce, J. Forsyth, W. Murphy, D. Warren, J. Adams, E. Jackson and R. Hay.

Another personnel change affecting "W" around this time concerns SO(CO) who, in the person of A/Lt. Cdr. W.S. Brooke, was appointed in the summer of 1943 to serve under SCNO(L). Since then he had played a major role with respect to the RCN's participation in Combined Operations under the Royal Navy -- mainly as it relates to Beach Commando "W" and LCI(L)s. On Jun. 29, 1944, he wrote to Vice-Admiral Nelles (Head, CNMO) requesting his "resignation as a temporary officer in the RCNVR may be effective at any early date."[187] Noting first that because of his *age his service had been largely ashore "and very disappointing in that duties assigned were seldom important and at no time kept me fully occupied", he then comments:[188]

*Brooke was born in 1902.

> In common with many others, I willingly gave up the prospects which I had earned by twenty years hard work in business, and I now face the task of endeavouring to salvage some small portion of those prospects -- a task increasingly difficult as each day passes.

As a result of being intensively preoccupied with the three Canadian LCI(L) flotillas immediately prior to and during the recent Normandy invasion, he first admits that "the strain of the period persists" and then adds: "For the better part of the past year, the long hours every day for seven days a week with no leave has been most wearying."[189] In the margin of the letter and dated Jun. 30, NAPERS Captain wrote: "... has made and can continue to make valuable contribution. His main trouble is that he can not, or will not, relax. A change of appointment might help."[190]

In a draft memorandum to NSHQ composed about Jul. 1, CNMO begins by recommending acceptance of the resignation request, then notes the "marked success" achieved by Brooke as Staff Officer (Combined Operations) under SCNO(L), for which he had thrice been recommended for confirmation of lieutenant-commander rank and increased seniority, and concludes by pointing out that, with the imminent disbandment of the LCI(L) flotillas and Beach Party, the necessity for the SO(CO) position would lapse.[191] Accordingly, on Aug. 30, when the two Combined Operations units were officially "paid off", Nelles accepted Brooke's request "with regret".[192] At the time of advising NSHQ a month later that its Combined Operations section was being discontinued as of Sept. 30, CNMO also announced:[193]

> Lt/Cdr Brooke is appointed Niobe add'l for passage to Canada to date 6 Oct and Stadacona add'l for leave and disposal DTBR. This officer has been ordered to report NSHQ on arrival in Canada.

Training. A picked team consisting of Lts. Cronin and Shales and twelve ratings (four each from W-1, W-2, and W-3 respectively) made an "excellent showing" at a two-week sniping and scouting course which they completed in early June at #1 CTS.[194]

Lts. Finley, Hampson, and Vaillancourt, together with about two dozen ratings, returned to HMS Vectis from HMS Volcano (located near Seascales, Cumberland) on Jun. 20 after ten days instruction dealing with mines, booby traps, and beach obstacles.[195]

Apart from such specialized courses taken at various locations on the mainland, "local training" around HMS Vectis on the Isle of Wight consisted principally of beach drill, pistol and rifle shooting, and PT.[196] On May 25 Com Force J approved "W"'s request to bivouac and carry out landing craft beach drills for a week on Bracklesham Beach commencing May 28.[197]

According to "W"'s June 19 monthly report:[198]

> ... participation in a small exercise on June 1st was arranged through Cdr. Prior, RN, Senior Training Officer, Force 'J'. It is expected that other larger exercises will be forthcoming shortly, especially since the attachment to us on June 13th, of No. 1 RN Beach Signal Section.

The only additional Exercise (and in fact the last of any kind for "W") took place on Jun. 30 when the Commando utilized four assault landing craft carried by LSI(M) HMCS Prince Robert in order to practice beach landing and leaving procedures.[199]

Beach Signals Section. As already mentioned (vide supra, p.2), the organizational structure within Combined Operations provided for the attachment to each Beach Commando of a Beach Signals Section consisting of two signal officers and twenty-eight ratings (including one Yeoman of Signals, one PO telegraphist, and seven Leading ratings).[200]

RN Beach Signals Sections were normally trained near Troon in Scotland (HMS Dundonald II) and one would only join up with a Beach Commando when the latter was about to take part in an Operation or (occasionally) an Exercise.[201]

Perhaps the earliest official reference to "W" having an attached Beach Signal Unit appears as part of the British First Sea Lord's Proposal #4 made on Aug. 31, 1943, at the special Cabinet War Committee meeting in Quebec City (vide supra, p.5). With the Committee's approval of Proposal #4 in its entirety at their Sept. 8 meeting, it could be presumed that an RCN Beach Signals Section would be duly established and staffed.

The issue is then referred to in two particular paragraphs of a Sept. 24 memorandum from Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel to DOOP. Paragraph #3 reveals that NSHQ was contemplating the use of personnel on "RN loan" to Combined Operations to staff required positions for signalmen, telegraphists, and one complete Beach Signal Unit.[202] Paragraph #8 recommends appointing ratings who have "some knowledge of signals" and who, "if possible, failed the Signals Course at St. Hyacinthe."[203]

More than six months elapsed before the next relevant reference occurs. While still based in HMS Lizard, PBM "W" replied as follows on Apr. 19, 1944, to SCNO(L)'s letter written a week before:[204]

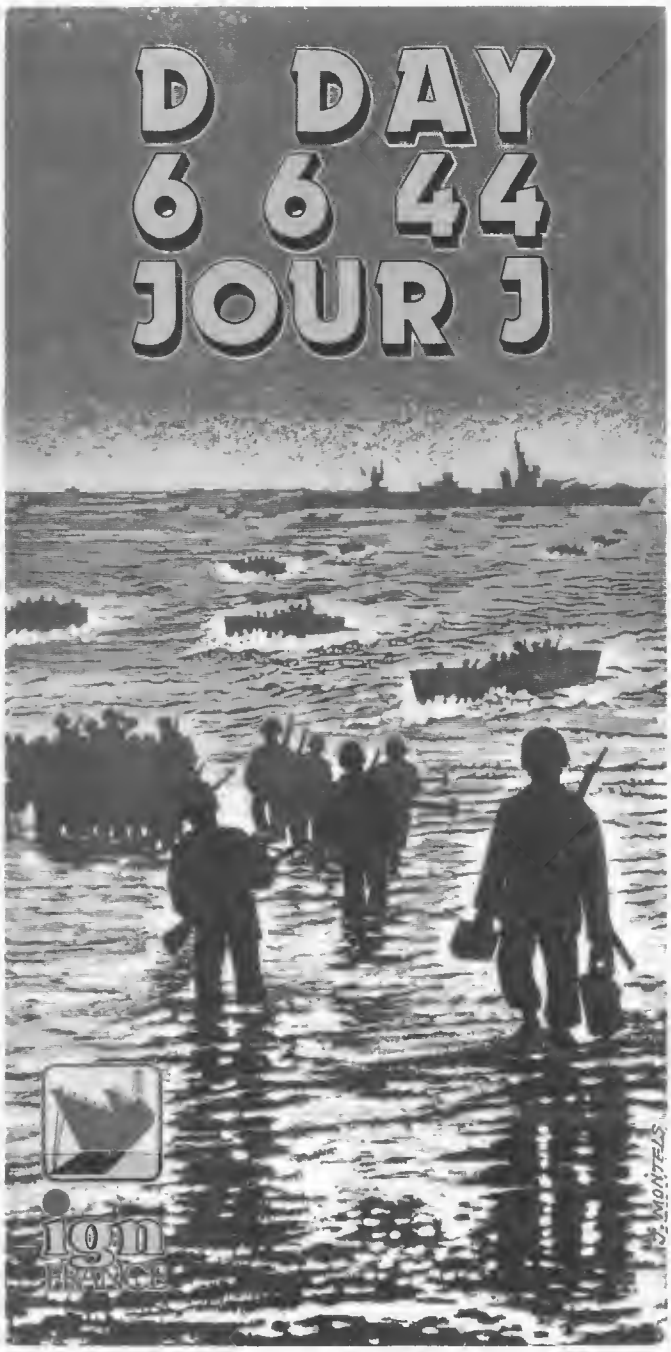
> It is submitted that if there is time available for the training of Officers and Ratings, it would be of great assistance to appoint a Canadian Beach Signal Section to "W" Commando. So far we have not had Signals attached to us, but in an operation we would have to rely to a great extent upon them, and a Canadian unit trained with this Commando would be likely to increase efficiency.

On May 27, Com Force J informed ANCXF that although none had yet been allocated to "W", a Canadian Beach Signal unit was then available in Canada. "If so," J's message concluded, "request this be called forward ASA convenient."[205] Two days later CNMO advised Com Force J that, in fact, no such naval unit existed in Canada.[206] Finally on Jun. 13, a week after D-Day, RN Beach Signals Section No. 1 joined RCN Beach Commando "W".[207]

Stores and equipment. With respect to transport, SO(CO) noted that "W"'s jeep, having been condemned by REME, had been turned in and replaced on Jun. 8.[208] "It is expected," SO(CO) announced a week later after consulting NAPERS, "that the Commando will shortly commence taking delivery of the operational vehicles."[209] On Jun. 20 CNMO informed C.O. "W" that the six cars allocated to the Beach Commando were numbered consecutively from RCN 45 to RCN 50.[210]

Two other items obtained at this time warrant mention:

1. In response to CNMO's May 30 request, CMHQ authorized the release on Jun. 5 of three bren guns and associated stores to "W" for operational use.[211]



NORMANDY BEACHES
JUNE 6 1944

2. On Jun. 9 CNMO asked "W" to pick up Canadian Army Flotation Gear (consisting of two flotation jackets and one 3-inch mortar box) at Aldershot and carry out trials to judge its effectiveness.[212] As advance trials proved "quite successful", on Jun. 20 CNMO signalled NSHQ:[213]

> Request eighteen sets flotation jackets (web equipment) only for early operational use. If available most desirable jackets be despatched by air very early date.

D-Day and afterwards. Operation "Overlord" (code name for the liberation of Western Europe) commenced on the evening of Jun. 5, 1944, when Allied air and naval transports started to leave from their bases in Britain and headed for Normandy where army units, led by paratroopers, would begin landing early the next morning. We are interested only in the part of the naval phase (code-named Operation "Neptune") which involved the disembarkation of troops, armour, guns, equipment, and stores from assorted ships and landing craft on to one of the five designated sector beaches.

For the assault on Normandy beaches between Cherbourg on the west and Le Havre on the east, the Allied Naval Expeditionary Force (ANXF) under Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, RN, was split into two Task Forces: the Western under Rear-Admiral A.G. Kirk, USN, was responsible for landings in both Utah and Omaha sectors, which extended some forty miles from west to east between Quinéville and Ste Honorine-des-Pertes; the Eastern Task Force under Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, RN, was responsible for Gold, Juno, and Sword sectors extending about the same distance from Port-en-Bessin to Ouistreham. Utah and Omaha beaches were stormed by Lieutenant-General O.N. Bradley's 1st U.S. Army and Lieutenant-General M.C. Dempsey's 2nd British Army (which included the 3rd Canadian Infantry

Division) went ashore in the three eastern sectors.

Altogether eight RN Beach Commandos took part in the June 6 D-Day Normandy landings: "F" and "R" in Gold sector under Force G; "L", "P", and "S" in Juno sector under Force J; and "J", "Q", and "T" in Sword sector under Force S. Because RCN Beach Commando "W" was attached to Force J, our concern is limited to Juno sector's two beaches -- respectively named "Mike" and "Nan" -- which were located within the ten-mile stretch from Graye-sur-Mer on the west to Langrune-sur-Mer on the east, with Courseulles-sur-Mer and Bernières-sur-Mer situated in between.

In passing it is interesting to note that on Jun. 13 Vice-Admiral Nelles wrote to thank both Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, RN (Commander of the Eastern Naval Task Group) and Commodore G.N. Oliver, RN (Commander Force J) for his visit to Juno beaches the previous day.[214] Beach Commando "W", meanwhile, waited in the wings, "ready to relieve an assault commando as soon as required."[215]

To CNMO's Jun. 14 request for a Canadian LCI(L) to transport the Canadian Commando to the assault beaches for experience,[216] ANCXF replied two days afterwards by saying that no LCI(L) could be spared and, besides, "W" was "also required to be available at short notice to move if called for."[217] Although Com Force J "most strongly recommended" the request in its Jun. 29 signal to C-in-C Portsmouth, the latter's answer on the following day said it "cannot be approved at present, but will be reconsidered at a later date."[218]

By the end of June when it appeared unlikely that "W" would play any part in the Normandy show, the Commando was granted quarterly leave by Maintenance Captain, HMS Vectis.[219] On the first of July, "W" signalled to CNMO:[220]

> Officers and men of "W" Commando embarking on 9 days leave commencing July 3rd and 4th. Request correspondence of immediate importance be addressed c/o CNMO[:] remainder as before.

As revealed by RCN MTB #462's "restricted" memo 031340 to CNMO, (R) HMS Hornet (located at Portsmouth), one "W" officer apparently planned on spending at least part of his leave in Normandy: "Intend embarking LT EG FINLEY RCNVR for passage today Monday 3rd July."[221] Then on the evening of Jul. 4, less than forty-eight hours after most personnel had dispersed, "W" was alerted (presumably by CNMO) to the contents of Com Force J's Confidential 041652B addressed to C-in-C Portsmouth, viz.:[222]

> A.N.C.X.F. has agreed to send "W" RCN Beach Commando by LCI(L) to Juno area for period of experience in beach duties. Request LCI(L) ex[?] RCN Flotilla may collect them at Cowes A.M. Friday 7th July.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

MESSAGE
OF
GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
(SUPREME COMANDER, OPERATION "OVERLORD")
TO HIS TROOPS
ON THE EVE OF THE NORMANDY INVASION

Commandement Suprême
des Forces Expéditionnaires Alliées

Soldats, Marins et Aviateurs des Forces Expéditionnaires Alliées!

Vous êtes sur le point de vous embarquer pour la Grande Croisade vers laquelle ont tendu tous nos efforts pendant de longs mois. Les yeux du monde sont fixés sur vous. Les espoirs, les prières de tous les peuples épris de liberté vous accompagnent. Avec nos valeureux Alliés et nos frères d'armes des autres fronts, vous détruirez la machine de guerre allemande, vous anéantirez le joug de la tyrannie que les Nazis exercent sur les peuples d'Europe et vous apporterez la sécurité dans un monde libre.

Votre tâche ne sera pas facile. Votre ennemi est bien entraîné, bien équipé et dur au combat. Il luttera sauvagement.

Mais nous sommes en 1944! Beaucoup de choses ont changé depuis le triomphe nazi des années 1940-41. Les Nations-Unies ont infligé de grandes défaites aux Allemands, dans des combats d'homme à homme. Notre offensive aérienne a sérieusement diminué leur capacité à faire la guerre sur terre et dans les airs. Notre effort de guerre nous a donné une supériorité écrasante en armes et munitions, et a mis à notre disposition d'importantes réserves d'hommes bien entraînés. La fortune de la batallle a tourné! Les hommes libres du monde marchent ensemble vers la Victoire!

J'ai totalement confiance en votre courage, votre dévouement et votre compétence dans la bataille. Nous n'accepterons que la Victoire totale!

Bonne chance! Implorons la bénédiction du Tout-Puissant sur cette grande et noble entreprise.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

ENGLAND

S



FRANCE

The following twenty pages of photographs, taken by Lt. Richard Graham ("Bus") Arless, RCNVR, comprise almost the entire portfolio which he shot while on his assignment of covering "W" during its July/ August stint on Juno sector of the Normandy beachhead.



A B A. Therien in full assault gear



Awaiting transport --- Cowes, July 7, 1944



*Embarking in *LCI(L) 298, RCN's 1st Flotilla*

**LCI(L) = Landing Craft Infantry (Large)*



All Aboard!



July 8, 1944 - Mike beach, Juno sector, Normandy



Mike beach signal station. Second from left is Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan, PBM of "W"



L/R: Lt. Cdrs. D. O'Hagan & R. Johnstone, ABs D. Kroshewsky & W. Cronkhite, and three other unidentified "W" personnel anxiously gaze seawards.



Stormy weather aftermath



Continuous traffic jam



Giant beach

machines

prevent

**LCT 2484*

from

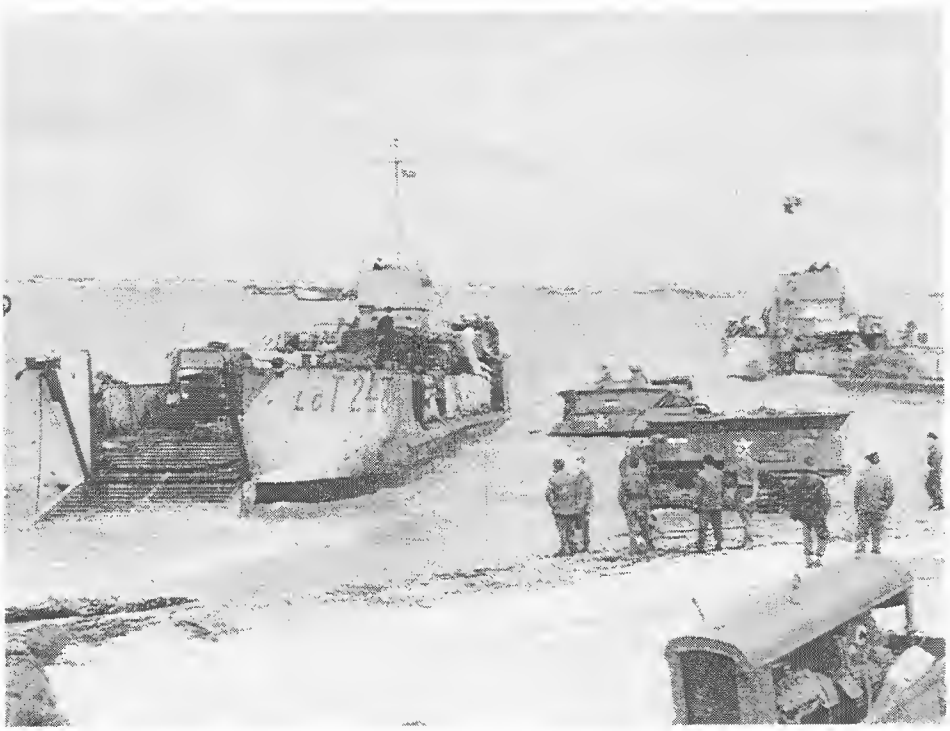
broaching

to.





**LCT = Landing Craft Tank*



LCT 2484 beaches safely





Inbound LCTs



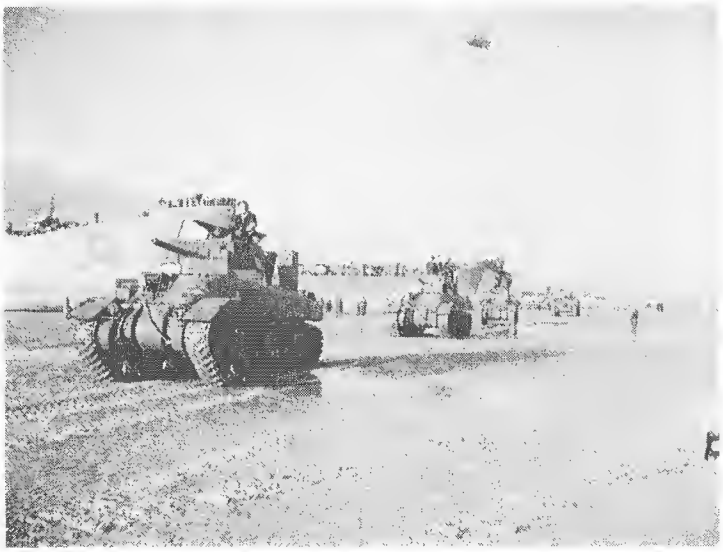
LCT 2232 being signalled in



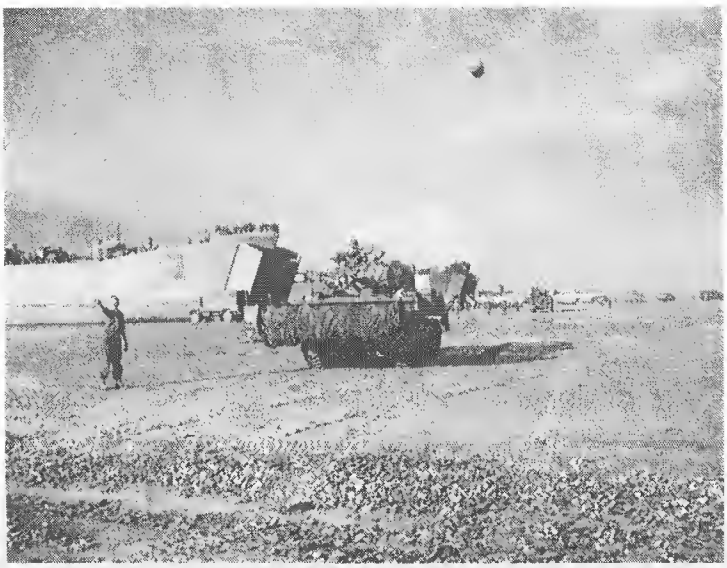
Off-loading RCAMC truck and personnel



Landing



Ship



Tanks

As far

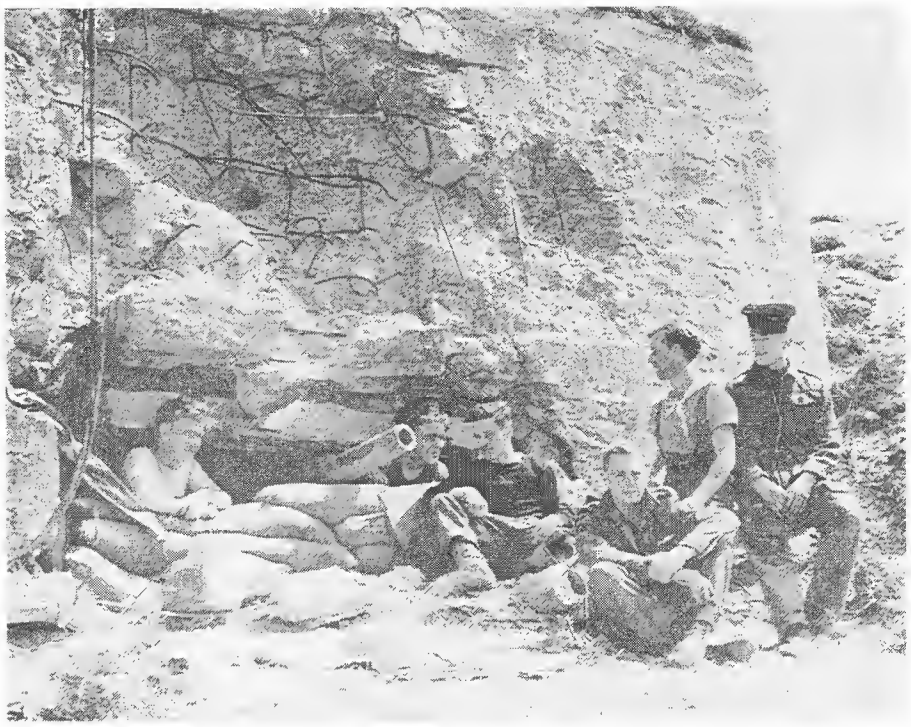


as the eye



can see





W-2 ratings using this former German fort for "digs" are (left to right): J. Ross, A. Petty, J. White, J. Forsyth, W. Murphy, A. Watt



W-2 Beach Party members (left to right) kneeling: A. Watt, D. Kennedy, R. Barnes, E. Woodall, D. Trewin, A. Petty, A. Morris, J. White; standing: W. Murphy, J. Adams, J. Roy, D. McIntyre, D. Rayburn, W. Cronkhite, D. Kroshewsky, J. Ross, R. Nelson



Sleeping and living quarters for (left to right): J. Offless, R. Nelson, D. Smiley (lying on floor), A. Morris (in white jumper), J. Adams (at extreme right)



AB A. Watt slinging his mick



AB G. Vilneff (right) and buddy cover their tent, a flak-downed barrage balloon, with camouflage neeting

COOKS to the GALLEY



L/R: J. Forsyth, J. Caler, W. Cronkhite, A. Morris, D. McIntyre, W. Murphy



*L/R: A. Petty, D. Murphy, *, *, D. Kroshewsky, J. Adams, D. McIntyre*

* = *unidentified*



Keeping fit

W-2 Beach Party exercises under PO D. McIntyre





Hey! How do we get down from up here?



Simple. PO D. McIntyre shows steel-shod boots make sliding easy

Of course no recreation program is complete without

BASEBALL



-- an LST for a centrefield fence --



Checking over their Lewis gun are (left to right): ABs P. Demontigny, J. Read, and I Watkins.



AB G. Vilneff writing home



Seated atop his "Little Hamilton" dug-out, AB R. Burse reads Life magazine's Oct. 25, 1943 issue which features Mary Martin on the cover



AB E. Woodall kneels to examine cross marking German soldier's grave



AB D. Trewin rests his hand on a sign erected by the Germans as a warning of hidden mines in the vicinity



ABs W. Cronkhite (left) and A. Morris (right) buy French money from Cpl. S. Johnson, R.C.E.



AB L. Quesnel (right) chats with Prv. M. Belanger (left) and Cpl. P. Jenkins, Régiment de la Chaudière, both just back from the Front.



RCNVR Public Relations officers on assignment with RCN Beach Commando "W" in Normandy (left to right): Lt. Cdrs. G. Lawrence and A. Tate, and Lt. R. G. Arless.

Section 7 Normandy beaches -- July 8 to August 21, 1944

Upon receiving word on the evening of Jul. 4 intimating "W" would be required to embark for France on Jul. 7, D/PBM Johnstone immediately sent out recalls to those on leave.[223] On Jul. 6 PCO Calshot instructed C-in-C TURCO, (R) ANCXF, as follows: "LCI(L) 298 has been detailed for Cowes at 1100 tomorrow 7th July and not repetition not LCI(L) 301 to embark "W" R.C.N. beach commando."[224] When LCI(L) 298 departed on the afternoon of Jul. *7 from Cowes, seven officers (PBM O'Hagan; D/PBM & C.O. Johnstone; BMs Sutherland, Rayburn, and Angus; ABMs Hampson and Christie) and **fifty-two ratings answered to muster-roll.[227]

CNMO's "SECRET" 071736B July, 1944, to HMCS Niobe (INFO NSHQ) reported: "... RCN Commando "W" are now en route to Juno Area for experience.....Duration of stay indefinite."[228] On this same day SO(CO)'s "SECRET" memorandum to NAPERS announced that "Naval Party 1568A" was "W"'s new address in France and personnel still in England would proceed to Normandy in due course.[229] The next morning, Jul. 8 (D+32), "W" disembarked on Juno's "Mike" beach and at noon officially relieved RN Beach Commando "P" which had suffered casualties during and after the initial Jun. 6 (D-Day) assault.[230] While the relieved Commando returned forthwith to UK for leave and regrouping, its PBM (Cdr. R.M. Prior, RN) and one BM remained for twenty-four hours to assist "W" adjust to the situation.[231]

* Two other official records indicate "W" personnel boarded the LCI(L) p.m. Jul. 6, arrived a.m. Jul. 7, and replaced an RN Beach Commando on Jul. 8.[225]

** Two other official records give the number of ratings as forty-eight and fifty-one respectively.[226]

George & Tovell describe "W"'s landing as taking place

> ... under the guns of H.M.S. "WARSPITE" which had just opened fire to join in the bombardment of Caen, the battle for which was beginning.[232]

And their narrative account continues:[233]

> Since "Juno" beaches were a scant ten miles from Caen they were very much in the war zone for the following week. Dog fights occurred over the beach area and protracted and intense raids took place against the anchorage each night.

Concerning one aspect of "W"'s rather sudden move to Normandy, the D/PBM comments:[234]

> Fortunately no stores were required to be taken initially and this eased the strain of recall and embarkation. Arms, extra blankets, tents and a few other odd items were the only articles of stores brought. As "W" Commando's role has been and still is one of relief, it has taken over the equipment as it has taken over the beach.

On Jul. 8 NOIC, Juno informed FOIC, British Assault Area (BAA) of the situation and future plans regarding the four Beach Commandos ("Peter, Sugar and Love with WILLY additional for training") under its command:[235]

a) The opening of a new beach at Langrune (east of Bernières) necessitates two and a third commandos in the extended Juno sector.
b) For "S" to be able to work the new beach, it will receive from "L" one party as well as replacements for various casualties suffered since D-Day.
c) Remainder of "L" will return to U.K. as being in excess of Juno requirements.
d) "The advent of "W" Commando is a convenient moment to make the above adjustments, and the following programme of Commando movements will therefore take place":

Sat. 8 Jul.	---	"W" takes over duties of "P" on Mike beach.
Sun. 9 Jul.	---	"P" and two "L" parties proceed to U.K. to re-equip, reporting to HMS Mastodon and Vectis respectively.

Wed. 19 Jul.	---	"P" and two "L" parties embark from U.K. for passage to BAA.
Thur. 20 Jul.	---	"P" relieves "W" on Mike beach. "W" transfers to Nan beach.
Sat. 22 Jul.	---	"S" proceeds to U.K., reporting to HMS Cricket on arrival for re-equipment.
	---	Third "L" party returns to U.K., reporting to HMS Vectis on arrival for disposal. Nominal lists of Officers and Ratings from "L" showing their eventual disposal will be forwarded separately.
Tues. 1 Aug.	---	"S" embarks for passage to BAA.
Thur. 3 Aug.	---	"W" proceeds to U.K. for disposal.

Lt. Crowhurst, ABM in W-1, had not been one of the seven officers who embarked for Normandy on Jul. 7. As a result of an audience with the Deputy Head, CNMO, he left "W" Commando on Jul. 8 and joined HMCS Prince David on Jul. 17 as Beachmaster for the LSI(M)'s assault landing craft.[236] His W-1 ABM position would thereafter remain unfilled.

On Jul. 13 CNMO advised HMCS Niobe and NSHQ that Lts. Cronin and Vaillancourt (both W-3 ABMs), sixteen ratings, and the RN Beach Signal Unit were en route to join "W" in Juno sector.[237] The next day Lt. Bentley, who was still in UK, informed SO(CO) that Lt. Finley had delivered "W"'s jeep to Newport where REME would overhaul and hold it until called for.[238] On the same day Bentley told CNMO that he, Lt. Finley, PO Thacker, and ABs Madden, Joyes, and Greenwood would be proceeding to Normandy on Jul. 16, and that consequently:[239]

> 2. The entire personnel of "W" Commando is now overseas in France, with the exception of:-- Lieut. K.G. Crowhurst (drafted); AB Downey (hospital); A.B. Goodwin (drafted).
> 3. Please amend nominal lists recently forwarded.

With the arrival on Jul. 17 by way of LCI(L) 310 and *LCT 465 of Lt. Bentley, Lt. Finley, and four ratings, "W"'s officers were disposed for "Mike" beach duties as follows:

PBM A/Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan
D/PBM & C.O. A/Lt. Cdr. Johnstone
Admin. & Stores Officer Lt. Bentley

W-1 Beach Party	W-2 Beach Party	W-3 Beach Party
BM -- Lt. D. Sutherland	Lt. A.D. Rayburn	Lt. F. Angus
ABM -- Lt. E.G. Finley	Lt. G. Hampson	Lt. J.B. Cronin
ABM -- (vacant)	Lt. C. Christie	Lt. J. Vaillancourt

With respect to Rating personnel, certain changes had occurred:

1. AB R. Crough drafted to General Service. Replaced by AB W. Wright.

2. AB D. Goodwin released on grounds of general unsuitability. To date no relief has arrived.

3. AB V. Downey left behind in hospital with hernia.

4. AB W. Newell, who was discharged to #20 Canadian General Hospital with a knee injury, has rejoined.

5. AB A. Morris and AB A. Petty are in hospital, former with ankle injury.

161004 July to CNMO, "W"'s final signal before its remaining members left HMS Vectis for Normandy, announced tersely: "Entire personnel of "W" Commando are now on far shore under NOIC JUNO".[240]

CNMO asked ANCXF on Jul. 17 whether it intended employing "W" operationally and, if not, when "W" might be "finally released".[241] The next day ANCXF informed Admiralty of its plan to release the following from Operation "Overlord":[242]

*LCT = Landing Craft Tank.

(A) F, R, E, M, C, U, V.
(B) One Party of L about July 22. Remainder of L to be retained to replace casualties and back up other Commandos in BAA.
(C) W about August 3.

ANCXF also indicated that either T or Q would shortly be retained from Gold sector "for any future operations with Force J".[243]

Taken from four different sources, the following extracts provide some idea of what preoccupied the Canadian Beach Commando during its first ten days on Juno "Mike" beach:

1. (from C.O. and D/PBM's Aug. 7 monthly report)[244]

 It may or may not be significant that records were set on two Beaches/Sectors when they were occupied by RCNBC "W". Much of the past training, vehicle handling in particular, has proved of immense value.

2. (from PBM's Aug. 31 final report)[245]

 The men worked in well with the Army Beach Group and, owing to their course in vehicle driving, were able to be of considerable use to the Army and materially helped in the fast turn round of craft by being able to disembark all types of driverless vehicles. It is strongly recommended that this course be given to all Beach Parties as the addition of about sixty drivers to the *RASC drivers is invaluable and must have greatly helped the Army when they established their record days of getting nearly five hundred additional vehicles ashore each day.

3. (from RCN History Section -- London's 1944/45 Narrative "B")[246]

 "W" Commando and No.9 Beach Group immediately and unreservedly took to each other with the good results inevitable in close co-operation. The landing figures began to show an immediate increase. Some of the credit for this rise in vehicles landed must go to "W" Commando. A course in

* RASC = Royal Army Service Corps.

vehicle handling taken during the spring had qualified all ranks and rates to drive any sort of vehicle, and this is in actual fact what they did. By the assistance which was thus afforded to the handful of *R.A.O.C. drivers in their disembarkation of driverless vehicles "W" Commando was thus able to materially accelerate the turn round of craft and so increase landing rate by about 500 vehicles per day. Since "Juno Mike" was the main **M.T. Beach for the British Assault Area, this increase in landing was of considerable importance.

4. (from CNMO Annual Review, 1944?, p.4)[300]

The Canadian Beach Commando Force which received a gruelling training in preparation for the invasion was not, however, called in until several days after D-Day, but in that time it helped discharge 66,000 vehicles and more than forty-two tons of stores on the beach to which it had been assigned.

"P" Commando returned from U.K. on Jul. 18 and relieved "W" who, in turn, took over on the next day from "S" on Nan beach which was used only for disembarking stores.[247] An indication that "W"'s performance had been "more than satisfactory during the relieving period" is evidenced by the representation made by the Colonel of No.9 Beach Group to Captain Maud, RN (Chief PBM for Gold, Juno, and Sword sectors) in an attempt to retain "W" on Mike beach.[248] George & Tovell describe and assess "W"'s performance in these words:[249]

Their lack of training in and knowledge of Landing Craft (and Ships) Tank was soon overcome by experience. Seamanship improved with the realization of the limitations of the ships and craft with which they were concerned. The steel pontoon causeway which divided "Mike Green" from "Mike Red" and consistuted [sic] a considerable navigational hazard to LST's was quite beyond the knowledge and training of the unit, but with the help of R.N.R. "pilots" who were responsible for guiding LCT's onto it, the Beach Commando officers

* R.A.O.C. = Royal Army Ordnance Corps

** M.T. = Motor Transport

> soon learned how to control it to advantage. It was not easy for these inexperienced officers to assume the responsibility of beaching twelve LST's on a dark, windy night, especially in view of the unsatisfactory improvised markings for the causeway. It was not surprising therefore that one should run aground on the causeway. Fortunately the ship's weight caused the causeway to subside into the mud with the tide's ebb before her back could be broken and she was refloated, undamaged, on the next flood. That no major mishaps occurred is due entirely to the watchfulness, forethought and above all hard work of the senior officers of the party who had to be present for all beachings.

From this point on we shall present a more or less chronological sequence of events which "W" experienced during its five remaining weeks in Normandy. George and Tovell report that besides carrying out nightly air raids, "the enemy began shelling "Juno Nan Beach" on the 21st July from mobile positions to the east of the Orne."[250] Their narrative continues:[251]

> Fire from the Monitors "EREBUS" and "ROBERTS" failed to put a stop to this nuisance. Several raids by R.M. Commandos were frustrated by mined marshes lying between the coast and the batteries. Casualties to the R.A.'s and R.E.'s were caused, as well as damage to equipment, but only one officer was wounded by a shell fragment and had to be returned to the U.K. Vehicles, and especially "DUKW's" and Amphibious jeeps suffered from the shell fragmentation of these attacks.

According to PBM "W", Nan and Mike beaches were placed under "S" Commando on Jul. 22.[252] Two days later NOIC Juno's naval message 242332B (repeated to CNMO, NIOBE, FOBAA, PBM Nan White) informed Admiralty for NCRO as follows:[253]

> Regret to report Lt. ERIC FALT [sic] FINLEY RCNVR "W" suffered head injury due to shrapnel p.m. July 23rd[.] Admitted to hospital next of kin Mrs. M. ROSE [sic]) FINLEY 3940 Cote Des Neiges Apt.D.101 Montreal Quebec Canada.

(N.B. Lt. Finley, an ABM in W-1, is probably the officer referred to in the preceding quotation)

Obviously referring to NOIC Juno's memorandum to *FOIC,BAA a fortnight previously (vide supra, p.53), CNMO advised ANCXF on Jul. 24 that unless suitable employment was contemplated for "W", it would be disbanded upon its Aug. 3 return to U.K.[254] CNMO requested early confirmation regarding its disbandment intention and indicated that in any event the Commando should go initially to HMS Vectis to collect personal gear.[255]

Meanwhile, according to George and Tovell, "W"'s duties on Nan (a stores beach only)

> consisted of beaching and drying out seven "Mark Five" LCT's and eight to twelve LBV's each tide on "Nan Red" and the mooring of **three to six coasters each daylight tide on "Nan Green". The latter beach was therefore given the additional role of Advance Headquarters for N.O.I.C. Courseulles and as such administered the despatch "DUKW" service for transporting personnel and signals to and from the craft shelter. The duty "DUKW" also transported Captain Patrols, Captain Northbound-Southbound Sailings, and Captain M/S to and from their headquarters ships for staff conferences with F.O.B.A.A.[256]

On Jul. 29 "W" was scheduled to return to U.K. but at the last minute NOIC Juno decided to retain the Canadian Commando for Mike beach and discharge "P" instead.[257] With the Allied capture of Caen by the end of the month, the peak period had been reached and passed, so that the work for the Juno beach commandos gradually decreased over the ensuing three weeks.[258]

A "deferred" and "restricted" Aug. 1st memorandum from Admiralty informed HMS Monck that, according to CNMO, "RCN BC W is being disbanded from August 31st."[259]

The Aug. 7 letter which SO(CO) received from C.O. "W" on Aug. 11, is worth quoting in full:[260]

* FOIC,BAA = Flag Officer in Command, British Assault Area.

** The PBM's Aug. 31 report gives "two or three coasters".[255]

Dear "W.S." Normandy -- Aug. 7th/44

Have sadly neglected official & unofficial correspondence. It was my intention at first to await our return & then attend to all such matters, fully and at leisure, but we were asked to stay and this alteration of plans is now forcing my hand.

I intend to get some sort of monthly report away which may or may not arrive coincident with this. Aside from that however there are one or two things you might do if you will be so kind. To begin with, we would like to know to what hospital Lt. E.G. Finley was finally taken. We suspect is was Basingstoke but can't be sure. Once the hospitals over here get hold of a body they get rid of it so quickly that it takes a trained Staff of Operators to follow the amazingly involved disposal route. We have been wondering about Finley, not knowing just how bad his wound may have been.

Item "two" is another hospital case: Lt. R.I. Shales, who ought to be in #18 C.G.H. In his case we have wondered if he may not be well enough to join us. It would be nice for him and he would be useful as we are short two officers [Crowhurst and Finley].

The third request is merely that you make certain CFMO is forwarding mail to Naval Party 1568A. I wrote telling him to belay the mail, when I thought we were returning. I have sent a signal since but can't be sure that everything is thoroughly understood.

We have been doing not too badly so far - touch wood, and still remain quite busy. Several cases of diarrhea have been tabled but not in sufficient numbers to impair our efficiency.

Once they got used to the idea most of the men & officers were quite content to spend the extra time on our present Beach. Have had a little shelling & what not but find the g-- d--- flies the worst nuisance. They are an absolute menace!

As far as I can gather, we shall be knocking about here at least for another two weeks and in all probability longer. Will endeavour ["u" in endeavour is crossed out] to keep you better posted in future.

[signed] Dick Johnstone

Further to the final paragraph, the Aug. 7 monthly report states succinctly: "It has been intimated "W" Commando will remain in the Normandy Area at least until August 21st."[261]

SO(CO)'s reply to C.O. "W" was dated Aug. 14:[262]

Dear Johnstone,

Very many thanks for your note, which was the first we had heard from "W" aside from the casualty report on Finley. The latter is at Basingstoke Neurological and Plastic Surgery Hospital, according to the latest reports. Charlie Bond was in there with him for a while and said that Finley, still paralyzed down one side and suffering from severe headaches, seemed reasonably cheerful. Finley was of the opinion that the paralysis was only temporary. I spoke to Shales on the telephone at his temporary abode in the hospital near *Colchester. The official report that I had was that he was still using crutches and would not be out for a couple of weeks. Shales told me over the phone that he had not been using crutches and was going to dances! I told him to call me when he was released from hospital, but I doubt that it will be in time to join you.

We are arranging to have mail sent off, and hope it reaches you safely.

The future of "W" has been in our minds for some time. We expect that on the return to the United Kingdom you will be released, and the approved policy is for the majority of the officers to return to Canada and probably a number of the men. Those who will remain in the United Kingdom include officers, Sub Lieutenants or Acting Lieutenants, who may be required for the spare officers' "pool" here. The "pool" is not a large one, and the LCI(L) officers will, I expect, supply the bulk of those required. Seamen who have been over here less than two years, and certainly less than one year, may be retained for the pool here to provide the men required as replacements for corvettes, frigates and destroyers. Actually, if men are interested in a sea-going career, this is an excellent opportunity for them.

Best wishes to all, and please be sure to telephone me when you return to the United Kingdom. We have told the Admiralty that you should arrive back at "Vectis" to pick/pack up your gear. The jeep should be brought to London.

Yours sincerely,

[signed] W.S. Brooke
Lieutenant Commander, RCNVR,
Staff Officer (Combined Operations).

* No. 18 Canadian General Hospital was located near Colchester, Essex.

Meanwhile the Naval Board Secretary's Aug. 7 memorandum to CNMO indicated that disposal arrangements for personnel on the thirty Canadian-manned LCI(L)s after paying off would also apply to "the members of the Beach Commando Unit as and when they can be released."[263] Two days later SCNO(L) informed NSHQ that with the exception of ten officers and some seamen who would form a pool at HMCS Niobe, all LCI(L) personnel "will be returned to Canada" and the "Beach Party will accompany them."[264]

And that same day CNMO sent "W" (and the three LCI(L) flotillas) a set of guidelines entitled "Disposition of Personnel on Paying-Off and Closing Down of Activities."[265] Ratings were directed to report to HMCS Niobe and put desired requests for subsequent appointments in writing. Regarding "W", two officers (O'Hagan and Sutherland) would remain "RN loan" and all others (Angus, Bentley, Campbell, Christie, Cronin, Finley, Hampson, Johnstone, Rayburn, Shales, and Vaillancourt), being "surplus to requirements in UK", would be retained in HMCS Niobe pool.[266]

With respect to future disposition of both LCI(L) and "W" personnel, CNMO expressed its opinion on Aug. 10 to the Naval Board:[267]

> ... future employment of a number of these officers merits, it is submitted, very careful consideration. They have given excellent service, frequently in unusual situations. A number of the senior ones merit early consideration for command, and acting Lieutenant-Commanders should retain (if possible) rank.

On Aug. 11 and/or 12 CNMO requested FOBAA to be kept informed about "W" from whom it had received "no official reports or signals" since the Canadian Commando arrived in Normandy "a month ago"; and, as a consequence, its mail was not being forwarded.[268] Two days afterwards FOBAA advised CNMO that "mail for "W" should go to FMO

Courseulles to arrive up to and including 20th August" and thereafter be retained in UK.[269]

In what appears to have been his last official communication from Normandy, "W"'s C.O. requested CNMO on Aug. 18 to

> inform all authorities likely to be concerned, that designation "1568A" ought to be used no longer as a naval party number for RCNBC "W". This number applies to a large operational group from which we are on the point of withdrawing.[270]

Regretful of the existing confusion, he suggests that "until exclusive party number allotted", their address be changed to RCNBC "W", c/o GPO, London, as formerly.[271]

The dates of the Commando's departure from Normandy and arrival back in England vary:

1. On Aug. 24 SO(CO), on behalf of CNMO, notified NSHQ that ""W" returned from France 22nd August....."[272]

2. The D/PBM's Aug. 30 report to CNMO states that the Commando's "return was effected by LCI(L) on August 20th."[273]

3. The PBM's Aug. 31 report has "W" departing by LCI(L) on Aug. 20 and arriving at Cowes on the 22nd.[274]

4. An Aug. 23 exchange of signals between HMS Vectis and HMS Armadillo gives p.m. Aug. 22 for "W"'s arrival at Cowes.[275]

5. In their narrative of December 1944/January 1945, George and Tovell write: " "W" Commando turned over to "S" on 23rd August and arrived at Cowes p.m. 24th August by LCI(L)."[276]

Section 8 Disbanding at HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) -- August 22 to 31, 1944

With "W" back in HMS Vectis, the authorities had to decide upon its immediate and future disposition. Admiralty considered sending it to HMS Armadillo and/or HMS Dundonald II after nine days leave, but apparently accommodation posed a problem.[277] On Aug. 24 CNMO advised HMS Vectis that having been released by ANCXF's 17 1635 B July, "W" was being disbanded and the ratings granted ten days leave before reporting to HMCS Niobe with all their personal gear, while the officers were to report forthwith to CNMO.[278] C.O. "W" notified the Fleet Mail Officer on Aug. 26 of these arrangements and indicated that all personnel would probably be dispersed by Aug. 30 until which time the Commando's headquarters remained at HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) near Cowes.[279]

The task of assembling and turning in "W"'s equipment and materials is described in A/Lt. Cdr. Johnstone's Aug. 30 final report to CNMO:[280]

> Lieutenant J. Bentley has supervised the return of all stores with the exception of Arms and Ammunition. Gunnery Stores have been mustered and returned under the supervision of Lieut. F. Angus. All Naval Stores have been taken on charge by H.M.S. Vectis, Gunnery Stores have been returned to S.A.S.O. R.N. Armament Depot, Priddys Hard Gosport; surplus and second hand battledress, boots, denims and other items of Army clothing and equipment have been forwarded to the Army Return Stores Depot, Tongham. Temporary receipts for the respective stores have been sent with covering letters, by the safe hand of Lieut. Rayburn, to Commanding Officer, HMCS NIOBE.

Two separate lists show items returned by Lt. Angus between Aug. 26 and 28, one for gunnery stores and the other for arms and ammunition.[281] Each is reproduced herewith.

RETURNED GUNNERY STORES OF R.C.N.B.C. "W".

Webbing Eguipment [sic]. Patt. 1937.

98	82	Haversack (Large)
84	86	Packs (Small)
95	87	Water Bottle Carriers
35	33	Frogs
	45	Rifle Slings
84	83	Straps Shoulder (left)
85	80	Straps Shoulder (right)
25	25	Belts, Waist
114	115	Braces
40	39	Pouches (pistol)
	74	Pouches (rifle) [N.B. The "74" is crossed out]
23	24	Holsters (pistol)
	48 prs.	Gaiters
126	120	Straps Support (large pack)
	96 prs.	Straps Shoulder (large pack)
	65	Capes anti-gas
	79 prs.	Gloves anti-gas
38	67	Mess tins
	21	mess Plates (tin)
	14	forks
	16	Knives
	12	Spoons
74	73	Water Bottles
	6	Enamel mug.
	3	Gas Masks (assault)
	1	Gas Mask (old Type)
	2	Steel Helmet
	3	Leather Pistol Holsters.

[N.B.
1. Below and to the right of the above, there is a long minutely handwritten list of other stores items.
2. Where two numbers appear beside any of the above items, the right-hand one is crossed out on the original; thus the remaining number represents how many were received.
3. Near the bottom of the list is a pencilled notation: "returned Webbing by Lieut. F. Angus, RCNVR To Priddys Hard on 28/8/44".
4. "signed E. White for S.A.S.O. 14 Nov. '44" is written at the bottom of the page.[282]]

RETURNED ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM R.C.N.B.C. "W"

	30	- .303 Rifles No.4 Mk.1 29
28	30	Bayonets No. 4 II.
27	29	Scabbards for Bayonet No.4 II.
	3	Strip Lewis complete (cases)
	50	Mags. Lewis
	9	Lanchesters
	81	Mags.
	6	Mags. Filler Tools
	2	Comb. Tools
	7	Bayonets No.I
	8	Scabbards Bayonets No. I + II
	1	Chest for Lanchester
	1	Mk II .303 Bren L.M.G.
	2	Mk Ix .303 Bren L.M.G.
	3	Barrel Assy, Mk. II
	3	Chests Bren .303 M.G. Mk. I.
22	24	Mags. Bren
2	3	Rods cleaning cylinder [N.B. The "3" is crossed out]
	3	Brushes cleaning cylinder
	3	Mops cleaning cylinder
	3	Wallets spare parts (filled)
2	3	Bottles oil (pooled)

NOTE. These guns are on charge to RCNMO Haymarket[:]

41	.38 S & W Pistols Revoler [sic]
21	Cleaning rod (revolver)
35	Wire brushes (revolver)
19	Pull throughs
2	Screwdrivers
8	Wire Gauges

[N.B. 1. Where two numbers appear beside any of the above items, it is presumed that the left-hand one represents how many were received.

2. Near the bottom of the list is a pencilled notation: "returned Arms by Lieut. F. Angus, RCNVR, RCNBC "W" To Priddys Hard 28/8/44".

3. "signed E. White for S.A.S.O. 14 Nov '44" is written at the bottom of the page.[283]]

On Aug. 29 "W"'s C.O. advised HMS Armadillo's C.O. and CNMO's Secretary that:

1. all naval stores held by the Commando had been taken on charge by HMS Vectis;
2. all arms and ammunition, webbing equipment, and sundry gunnery stores had been returned to RN Armament Depot at Gosport; and
3. surplus and secondhand battledress, army boots, denims, etc., as well as a typewriter (Z094147), had been forwarded to Army Return Stores at Tongham.[284]

On the same day, meanwhile, SO(CO) at CNMO was informing such Canadian and British naval and military authorities as NSHQ, HMCS Niobe, Admiralty, RAMLC, and HMS Armadillo that Beach Commando "W" and the three LCI(L) flotillas would be disbanded effective Aug. 31.[285] SO(CO)'s earlier resignation request (vide supra, pp.45-46) was approved "with regret" the next day by Vice-Admiral Nelles.[286]

The Commando's Aug. 30 "FINAL REPORT" to CNMO (Ref. W.L.O.26) contains several comments concerning disbandment:[287]

1. Upon returning from Normandy, most personnel proceded on leave on Aug. 26.

2. "Paying off" details "were completed as of this date, with the departure of Lieutenant Rayburn and twenty-nine ratings for leave and disposal...in accordance with C.N.M.O.'s Signal 241116B."

3. "Left in hospital through illness or injury are:- Lieutenant E.G. Finley and ABs V. Downey (convalescing from hernia operation), A. Morris (ankle injury), W. Cronhite [sic] (appendicitis)."

4. "All Service Documents have been sent by safe hand to Commanding Officer, H.M.C.S. NIOBE. Residue of stationery, together with Imperial typewriter has been sent to Secretary, C.N.M.O. London by special baggage party. All books and publications issued by the Canadian Distributing Authority have been returned through Secretary, C.N.M.O.. A master list has been enclosed."

(N.B. The "baggage" referred to above, for which a SUPPLY/RECEIPT ticket was issued and dated Aug. 30, consisted of a large wooden box containing: a) an oil-skin wrapped parcel addressed to Canadian Distributing Authority; b) a parcel addressed to Canadian Fleet Mail Officer; c) sundry items of stationery; d) typewriter (Z094147) and metal container.)[288]

5. "The "W" Commando Jeep was picked up from R.E.M.E. Newport, where it had been overhauled and painted. It is being returned to C.N.M.O. London."

There follows, in summary form, some of the main comments made by PMB O'Hagan in his "Report on the training and operational activities of Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando "W", 31st August 1944":[289]

1. Despite lack of training and knowledge, "W" worked well and usefully in Normandy. Gradual improvement occurred in seamanship with respect to handling various landing craft.

2. Not having landed until a month after D-Day, it is difficult to evaluate the various training courses taken, "but had they made an assault landing I have no doubt they would have proved useful".

3. While the Petty Officers and Leading Seamen who were promoted to Combined Operations rates did perform well, older and more experienced officers and men would be and would have been more suitable.

On Oct. 30, two months after "W" had disbanded, C.O., HMCS Niobe received a signal dated Oct. 14 from C.O., RN Beach Commando "L" about "6 Smith Weston revolvers [serial numbers are included] left in armoury at Pines Camp, HMS Vectis, after "L" Commando returned from Normandy."[296] "L" had then proceeded to HMS Armadillo leaving their arms at Vectis; and, upon returning, the six revolvers were evidently missing. The remainder of the signal reads as follows:[297]

> The Armoury at Pines Camp was used in our absence by RCNBC "W", and it is possible that some of these pistols may have been taken by mistake by "W" Commando. Request you will make the necessary inquiries to help us clear this matter up.

FOOTNOTES

Number(s)	Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)
1	B.11. and/or Combined Operations Pamphlet No.10, p.13
2	Combined Operations Pamphlet No.17
3-4	B.1. file 1037-34-1
5	B.3. file 1037-34-4
6	B.5.
7	B.5. file N-08-1-12
8	B.1. file 1037-34-1
9	B.3. file 1037-34-4
10	B.11.
12	B.1. file 1037-34-1
13-18	A.2.
19	A.3.
20	G. vol.II, p.443
21	B.5. file 09-1-2
22	B.11. file 33-26-2
23-24	B.1. file 1037-34-1
25-26	B.11.
27	B.1.
28-29	B.1. file 1037-34-1
30	B.5.
31-38	B.1. file 1037-34-1 and/or B.5. file N-012-1
39	75/496, History Directorate, DND, Ottawa
40	B.5.
41	B.5. and/or B.11.
42-44	B.11.
45	B.8. (file NS 1054-1-8?)
46	B.5.
47	B.11. file 33-11-0
48	B.11.
49	B.5. (file 09-1-2?)
50	B.10. file 33-12-12
51	B.11. only implies these changes; no official record has been found
52-53	B.11.
54	C. file 33-11-0
55	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
56-57	B.11.
58	C. file 33-11-0
59	B.11.
60-61	B.5. file 0-12-1-3
62	B.5. and/or B.11.
63	B.5. file 0-12-1-3 and/or B.11.
64-66	B.5. file CS 33-17-1
67-68	B.11.
69	B.5. file 0-12-1-3 and/or B.11.
70	Vide infra, p.22
71	B.5. file CS 33-17-1

Number(s)	Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)
72-75	B.11. file 33-17-1
76	B.11.
77	B.10. and/or B.11.77
78	B.5. and/or B.11.
79	Macbeth told author (telcon -- Jul. 17, 1990)
80-85	B.11.
86	B.2.
87	B.11.
88	B.11. file 33-17-1
89	B.11.
90	B.5. and/or B.11.
91-93	B.11.
94	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.1)
95	B.11.
96	B.5. file CS 33-17-1
97	C. file S 1037-34-1 (vol.2 combined)
98-99	C. file 33-11-0
100	B.11.
101-103	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.1)
104	B.11.
105	D. p.30
106-110	B.11.
111-112	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
113-114	B.11.
115	D. p.6
116	D. (Enclosure A)
117-118	B.11.
119	B.10. file 33-11-16 and/or B.11.
120	B.5. file 012-1-3, B.11. and/or C.
121-122	B.5.
123	B.5. file 12-1-3
124	B.5. file 012-1-3
125	B.11. file 33-17-1
126	B.5. file 12-1-3
127	B.11.
128	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11.
129	B.5. file 012-1-3
130-131	B.11.
132	B.11. file 33-17-1
133-135	B.11.
136	B.5. file 012-1-3
137	B.10. file 33-11-16 and/or B.11.
138	B.10 file 33-11-16
139	D. p.30
140	B.11.
141	B.11. file 33-17-1
142	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
143-144	B.11.
145	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1

Number(s)	Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)
146	B.11. file 33-17-1
147	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
148-149	B.11.
150-151	B.11. file 33-17-1
152	B.16.
153-154	B.11.
155	B.11. file 33-17-1
156-157	B.11.
158	B.11. file 33-17-1
159	B.11.
160	B.11. file 33-17-1
161	B.11.
162-166	B.11. file 33-17-1
167	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
168	B.11.
169	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
170	B.11.
171-172	B.11. file 33-17-1 and/or C.
173-175	B.11.
176	B.11. and/or C.
177	D. p.30
178-179	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
180	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
181	B.6. and/or B.11.
182	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1 (vol.I)
183	B.11. and/or Jan. 12, 1990 letter from Christie to author
184	B.11. file 33-17-1
185	B.11.
186	B.11. file 33-17-1
187-190	B.11. file 33-26-4
191-192	B.11.
193	B.6. file NB 66-3
194	B.6. and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
195	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
196	B.6. file NB-66-3
197	B.11. file 33-17-1
198	B.6. file NB-66-3
199	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
200	B.11.
201	Oct. 7, 1990 letter from D. MacArthur to author
202-203	B.1. file 1037-34-1
204	B.11.
205-206	B.11. file 33-17-1
207	D. p.30
208	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
209-214	B.11. file 33-17-1
215	D. p.30
216	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
217	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1 (vol.I)

Number(s)	Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)
218-219	B.11.
220	B.6, file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
221	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
222	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol. II) and/or B.11.
223	B.11. and/or D. (vol.II), p.375
224	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol.II) and/or B.11.
225	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.II) and/or D. (vol.II), p.375
226	B.6. file NB 66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
227	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol.II) and/or B.11.
228	B.6. file NB 66-3
229	B.11. file 33-17-1
230-233	D. (vol.II), p.375
234-237	B.11.
238	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.II)
239	B.6. and/or B.11.
240-245	B.11.
246	D. (vol.II), p.375
247-251	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
252	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
253	B.11. file 33-11-0
254-255	B.11.
256-258	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
259-260	B.11. file 33-17-1
261	B.11.
262	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
263-264	C.
265-266	B.11.
267	B.11. file 33-11-0
268-275	B.11. file 33-17-1
276	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
277-280	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
281-283	B.6.
284-285	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
286	B.11.
287	B.6. file NB 66-3
288-289	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
290	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
291	B.6.
292-293	F. p.201
294-295	C. (pt.3)
296	B.11.
299	B.14.
301-302	F. pp.23, 24, 47, 54, 55
304	F. p.46

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX I

COMBINED OPERATIONS PAMPHLETS

No.	Title (year)	Date of Publication
1	GENERAL (1942)	September, 1942
2	BEACH ORGANISATION AND MAINTENANCE	September, 1942 March, 1944
6	R. SIGNALS (1941) [provisional]	17th September, 1941
6B	THE BEACH SIGNAL UNIT (1943)	February, 1943
8	ASSAULT BRIGADE PLANNING including Preparation of Landing Tables and Loading of Craft (1942)	October, 1942
9	RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE LOADING AND DISCHARGE OF SHIPS AND CRAFT (1942)	November, 1942
10	ABBREVIATIONS and DEFINITIONS (1944)	January, 1944
11	LANDING SHIPS INFANTRY (1943)	May, 1943
14A	MINOR LANDING CRAFT (1943)	May, 1943
14B	LANDING CRAFT SIGNAL PAMPHLET (Other than L.C.T.) (1942)	August, 1942
17	RN BEACH COMMANDOS (1943)	April, 1943
31	DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS for COMBINED OPERATIONS (1944)	March, 1944
38	RASC (1943)	March, 1943
39B	RAMC (Based on 1942 organization of Field Medical Units) (1943)	September, 1943
40	R.A.O.C. (1942)	December, 1942
41A and 41B	R.E.M.E. (1942)	
	41A. Part I - General Considerations Part II - Organization in Assault Force	
	41B. Organization for Units landing after the Assault Formation	October, 1942

N.B. All of the above, as well as many others not listed, are available (mainly in photocopy form) at History Directorate, Department of National Defence, Ottawa

APPENDIX II

RCN BEACH COMMANDO "W"

	Name of Officer	Rank(s)	Position(s)
1.	Angus, F.	S/Lt., Lt.	ABM W-3; BM W-3
2.	Baum, G.V.C.	S/Lt.	Beach Party
3.	Bentley, J.	Lt.	Administration & Stores Officer
4.	Bridle, P.A.	Lt.	Beach Party
5.	Campbell, L.O.	Lt.	BM W-3
6.	Christie, C.B.	Lt.	ABM W-2
7.	Cronin, J.B.	Lt.	ABM W-2
8.	Crowhurst, K.G.	S/Lt., Lt.	ABM W-1
9.	Cunningham, J.R.	Lt.	ABM W-2
10.	Finley, E.G.	Lt.	ABM W-1
11.	Hampson, H.G.	Lt.	ABM W-2
12.	Hatch, C.	Lt.	BM W-2, BM W-3
13.	Johnstone, R.J.	Lt., A/Lt. Cdr.	D/PBM, Commanding Officer
14.	Macbeth, J.K.	Lt.(n)	ABM W-3
15.	Macdonald, W.M.	Lt. Cdr.	PBM
16.	O'Hagan, D.J.P.	A/Lt. Cdr.	PBM
17.	Rayburn, A.D.	Lt.	ABM W-2, BM W-2
18.	Rumpel, O.H.	S/Lt.	Beach Party
19.	Sutherland, D.M.	Lt.	BM W-1
20.	Vaillancourt, J.	Lt.	ABM W-3
21.	Gray, J.G.	S/Lt.	Liaison Officer

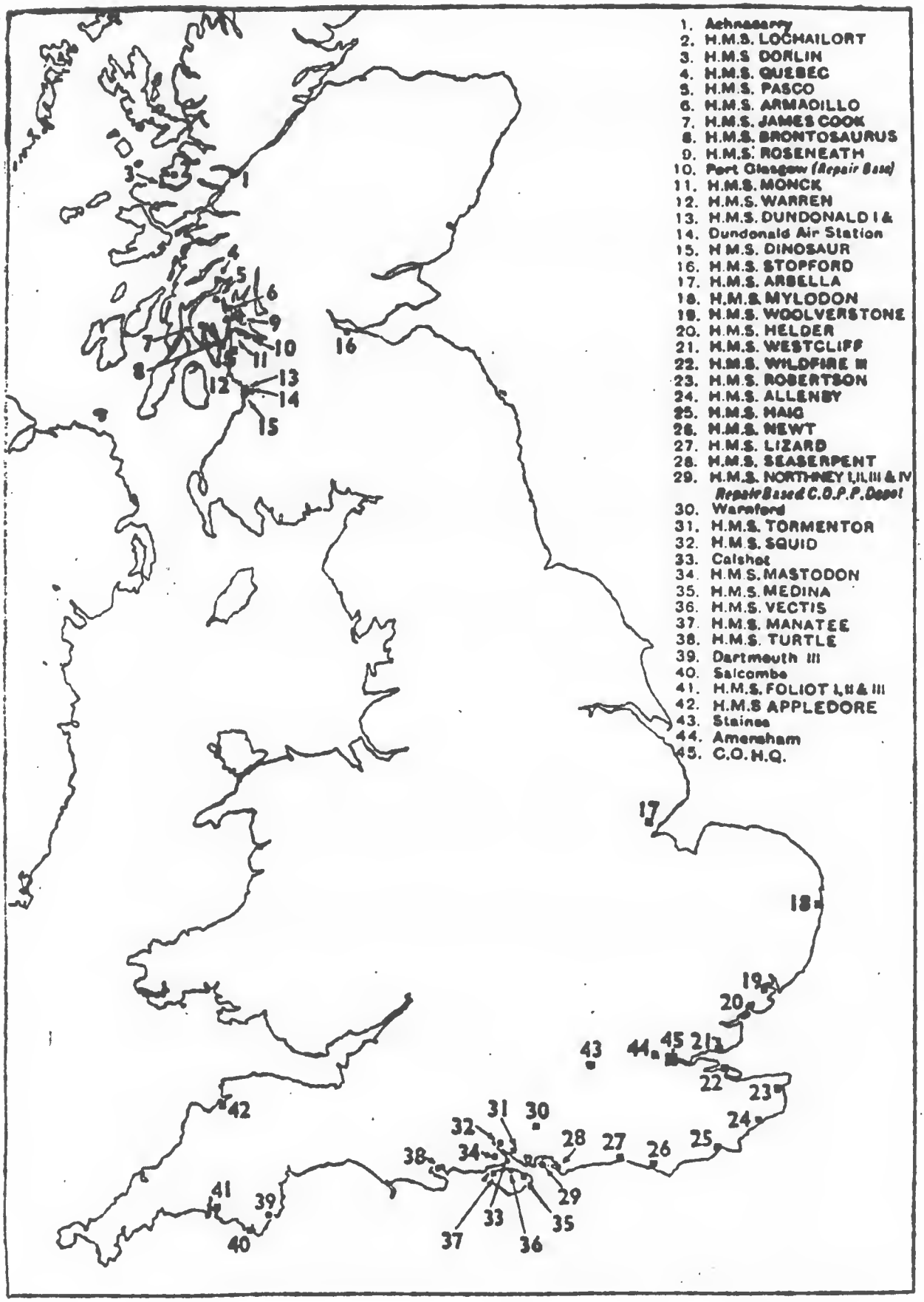
N.B. The above list shows the rank(s) and position(s) for each of the twenty-one RCNVR officers who held appointment at various times.

NOMINAL LIST "W" BEACH COMMANDO

Principal Beachmaster	A/Lieut. Cdr. D.J. O'Hagan G.M. R.C.N.V.R.
Commanding Officer	A/Lieut. Cdr. R.J. Johnstone R.C.N.V.R.
Ad. & Stores Officer	Lieut. J. Bentley, R.C.N.V.R.

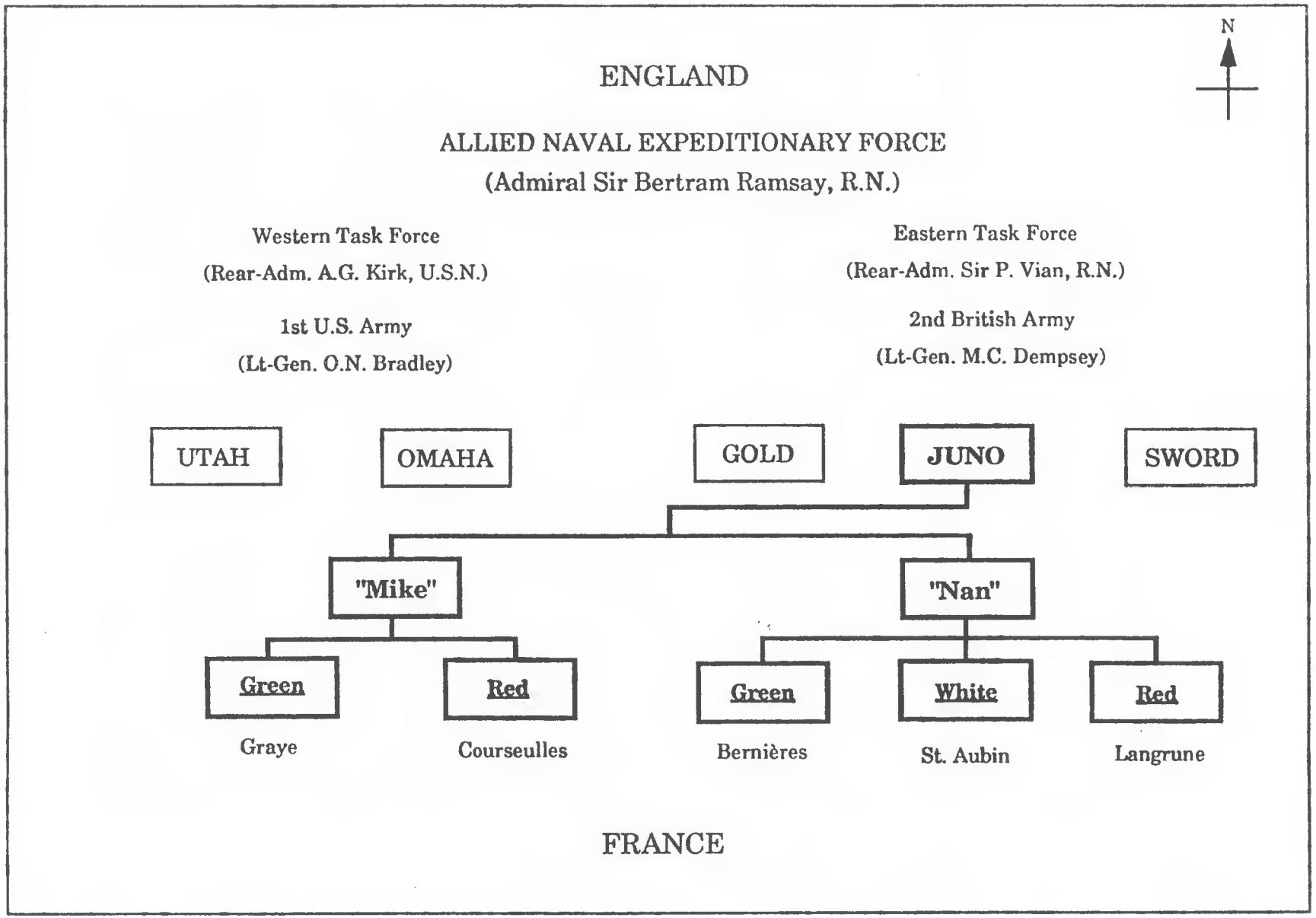
"W.1" B.M. - Lt. D. Sutherland RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. E.G. Finley RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. K.G. Crowhurst, RCNVR			"W.2" B.M. - Lt. A.D. Rayburn, RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. G. Hampson, RCNVR			"W.3" B.M. - Lt. F. Angus, RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. J.B. Cronin RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. J. Vaillancourt, RCNVR		
Jarrett, G.	A/P.O.	A.2635	Thacker, A.	P.O.	V.1434	Smith, I.	A/P.O.	A.1702
Smiley, D.	A/L.S.	V.37293	Mcintyre, D.	A/P.O.	V.5747	Jones, R.	A/L.S.	V.841
Warren, D.	A/L.S.	V.39693	Forsyth, J.	A/L.S.	V.10963	Hay, R.	A/L.S.	V.45449
Playtouw, J.	A/L.S.	V.46327	Murphy, W.	A/L.S.	V.5392	Jackson, E.	A.B.	V.44344
Joyce, J.	A/L.S.	A.4140	Adams, J.	A/L.S.	V.31229	Madden, G.	A.B.	V.24212
Therien, A.	A.B.	V.31372	White, J.	A.B.	A.5019	King, J.	A.B.	V.51758
Smith, R.E.	A.B.	V.41800	Sauve, I.	A.B.	V.4520	Quesnel, L.	A.B.	V.39610
Steel, H.	A.B.	V.40651	Faubert, R.	A.B.	V.44355	Deruchie, L.	A.B.	V.4365
Watkins, I.	A.B.	V.44071	Woodall, E.	A.B.	V.19246	Joyes, W.	A.B.	V.17772
Knight, N.	A.B.	V.54536	Nelson, R.C.	A/A.B.	V.38716	Horel, J.	A.B.	V.45584
Murray, H.	A.B.	V.19616	Goodwin, D.	A/A.B.	V.62012	Flemming, M.	A.B.	V.42327
Pendlebury, A.	A/A.B.	V.56436	Morris, A.	A/A.B.	V.38938	Murphy, D.	A.B.	V.2980
Smith, H.	A/A.B.	V.51476	Offless, J.	A/A.B.	V.37973	Caler, J.	A.B.	V.46031
Allen, J.	A/A.B.	V.49877	Kennedy, D.	A/A.B.	V.41864	Jones, J.	A.B.	V.42208
Vilneff, G.	A/A.B.	V.53046	Kroshewsky, P.	A/A.B.	V.64415	Demontigny, P.	A.B.	V.50928
Read, J.	A/A.B.	V.45963	Cronkhite, W.	A/A.B.	V.61557	Koch, L.	A.B.	V.51953
Albrechtson	A/A.B.	V.61185	Watt, A.	A/A.B.	V.56914	Harrington, J.	A/A.B.	V.16892
Newell, W.	A/A.B.	V.57709	Petty, A.	A/A.B.	V.54229	Mantais, L.	A/A.B.	V.60982
Fox, J.	A/A.B.	V.57307	Barnes, R.	A/A.B.	V.47862	Rennie, F.	A/A.B.	V.61476
Stone, G	A/A.B.	V.59719	Trewin, D.	A/A.B.	V.57668	Harding, C.	A/A.B.	V.61890
Casbourne, J.	A/A.B.	V.56832	Luff, C.	A/A.B.	V.56817	Byer, C.	A/AB	V.54476
Burse, R.	A/A.B.	V.48280	Ross, J.	A/A.B.	V.59089	Greenwood, D.	A/A.B.	V.61245
Sutherland, J.	A/A.B.	V.57957	Downey, V.	A/A.B.	V.57751	Germaine, A.	A/A.B.	V.38689
Hildreth, C.	A/A.B.	V.64412	Roy, J.	A/A.B.	V.58383	Westerman, L.	O.D.	V.58750
Crough, R.	A.B.	V.19467	Macintyre, P.	A/A.B.	V.55697			

N.B. The above list shows the Commando's complement around July 1, 1944.[299] Other ratings who served at one time include: PO G. Winn; ABs W.A. Burden, H. Byers, J. Skinner, W. Wright; ODs C. Armstrong, K. Beckman, F.J. Gamblin, H. Tapper, G. Yule. Names and particulars of other officers who served at various times appear in APPENDIX II.



Source: History of the Combined Operations Organization, 1940-1945. London: 1956, p.11.

OPERATION "NEPTUNE"



APPENDIX V

NAVAL SERVICE

WMM/LMH

File No.NS.S.1037-34-17
Vol.1(Staff)

MEMORANDUM TO STAFF OFFICER, COMBINED OPERATIONS

Reference: Training R.C.N. Beach Commando "W", H.M.S. "ARMADILLO"

With reference to C. in C., C.N.A.'s 141740 and our discussion of today on matters relating to the training of the above noted Commando Unit, I would like to make the following report:

2. The Officers appointed to command the first Canadian R.C.N. Beach Commando Unit arrived in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" on the 5th of December, 1943, to carry out a two weeks' training course. On the 6th of December, these Officers were taken over the complete assault course without any previous physical training or any opportunity being provided to limber up before undertaking the strenuous nature of this training.

During the period of two weeks, lectures were given on the subjects of airplane recognition, anti-gas measures, tides, radio telephone, small arms, etc. The Officers, Petty Officer and Leading Seamen giving these lectures came to the lecture room entirely unprepared and very greatly uninformed in regard to the subjects that they were to deal with, outstanding examples of which may be listed as follows:

(a) The lecture on radio telephone consisted of a few minutes discussion on tuning a R/T set (which the class was told they would not have), and the balance of the period was taken up by the Instructor and a few Midshipmen and Sub-lieutenants listening to radio programs from the B.B.C. The Instructor was unable to answer a question as to the batteries used or their voltage.

(b) A lecture was given on tides of an extremely elementary nature. No mention was made of the use of tide tables, and no instruction was given in regard to interpolation which appears of the utmost importance to Officers who may be called upon to land on beaches where no exact tide datum would be available. The Instructor, in response to a question, said that he had never heard the terms "apogee", "perigee", "aphelion", "perihelion".

(c) The lectures on airplane recognition consisted of a statement as to the importance of knowing the planes which might be met, and the class was instructed that they should be familiar with 60 types, but the types were not enumerated, and no publications were provided for their instruction. The lectures on this subject consisted of the lecturer pointing out obvious points of a plane to be observed for the purpose of recognition. In each case the lecturer did not spend more than five or six minutes on his subject and used the balance of the period for discussion with members of the class on the relative merits of various types of plane from a fighting or bombing point of view.

3. With the exception of a few lectures on beach organization, all of the instruction was on a similar scale including the lectures on small arms. The lecturers were normally from five to fifteen minutes late, the syllabus was continually changed without previous notice, and hardly one operation was carried out according to schedule, for example, after waiting forty minutes to be briefed for a night operation, which was to consist of an opposed landing, the Officers were advised that the plan could not be carried out as the Gunnery Officer had forgotten all about it. I was advised by Senior Lieutenants of the Unit that in an operation to be carried out at Inveraray during my absence in London on duty the Unit was instructed to be aboard Landing Craft at 0600 and that they waited there until 0800, when a Lieutenant, R.N., appeared to tell them that he had forgotten to make any arrangements for the necessary equipment to carry out the operation, with the result that the operation, from an instructional point of view, was a complete failure.

4. On the completion of two weeks' training, it was proposed that the Canadian Officers would take over command of the Canadian Unit and continue their training in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" in the presence of the R.N. Officers who had command of the Unit for the previous eight weeks. As the Canadian Officers were advised three days after their arrival in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" that the Canadian Ratings had voted to retain their R.N. Officers, it was regarded by me as undesirable that the Unit should continue to carry out their training in this establishment.

5. Special training notes were distributed to the Officers shortly after their arrival, consisting of mimeographed sheets, and the Officers were at the same time advised that these notes were quite out of date and about 60 per cent incorrect. No effort was made to provide corrections for such notes.

[signed]

(W.M. Macdonald)
Lt. Cdr., R.C.N.V.R.

O T T A W A
19th January, 1944.

S E C R E T.

8th February, [194]4.

Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas),
Navy Office of Canada,
King's House, 10 Haymarket,
London, S.W.1

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

During my recent [January 30th] visit to the Clyde area and to H.M.S. "Armadillo", where the Canadian Beach Party is being trained, I made, and caused others to make, such inquiries as it was possible to make, when visiting the command of another Flag Officer, as to the justification that might exist for the statements made by Lieut.Commander W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR, in his report dated 19th January.

It appears that there was a certain amount of misunderstanding on both sides. The Canadian personnel arrived full of keenness and fire expecting instant and equal keenness plus action. This was not forthcoming and I gather that the whole party reacted like a pricked balloon.

Several factors added to this sense of let-down. The course of lectures, being designed to meet the needs of R.N. personnel, contained a certain amount of material which the Canadian officers, being generally older and more senior than their R.N. colleagues, already knew and regarded as elementary. The Force which the Canadian party was to join on completion of their training could not immediately receive them, and consequently they had to remain at "Armadillo" in an isolated establishment, located on the West shore of Loch Long, which can only be reached by water, and the weather prevailing there at this time of the year is bad. All these factors added a depressing influence.

Macdonald did not help matters by taking himself too seriously, and insisting on certain rights and privileges as the Senior Officer of the Canadian Beach Party - a position for which he was most unsuitable. He himself was a misfit who, instead of trying to fit into the working organization, saw himself in the light of a crusader for the rights of others. In consequence, he served only to magnify differences instead of composing them.

Macdonald and two other officers on one occasion proceeded on week-end leave which ended on noon, Sunday. They returned to "Armadillo" the following Tuesday.

Two officers of the Canadian Beach Party are, among others, about to be court-martialled for being involved in an incident in which a landing craft was taken without permission for passage across the Clyde.

It is hoped that orders for the Canadian Beach Party to join their Force will be issued at an early date, and as no further Canadian personnel will be trained at H.M.S. "Armadillo", these difficulties will not arise again.

The Canadian Beach Party, which is designated Beach Party "W", has been allocated to Force "J". The Canadian L.C.I.(L)'s have also been allocated to this Force, and it is expected that H.M.C.S. "Prince David" and "Prince Henry" will be allocated to the same Force.

[handwritten] Yours sincerely

(sgd) Percy W. Nelles

Vice Admiral, R.C.N.
Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas)

The Hon. Angus L. Macdonald,
Minister of National Defence for
Naval Services,

Ottawa, Canada.

[handwritten] In accordance with my request orders have been given I am informed, for "W" to be moved to Plymouth

(sgd) P.W.N.

Hitler's "COMMANDO ORDER"

The Führer
No.003830/42 g.Kdos.OWK/Wst

SECRET
F.H. Qu.18.10.1942
12 copies
Copy No.12.

1. For a long time now our opponents have been employing in their conduct of the war, methods which contravene the International Convention of Geneva. The members of the so-called Commandos behave in a particularly brutal and underhand manner; and it has been established that those units recruit criminals not only from their own country but even former convicts set free in enemy territories. From captured orders it emerges that they are instructed not only to tie up prisoners, but also to kill out-of-hand unarmed captives who they think might prove an encumbrance to them, or hinder them in successfully carrying out their aims. Orders have indeed been found in which the killing of prisoners has positively been demanded of them.

2. In this connection it has already been notified in an Appendix to Army Orders of 7.10.1942. that in future, Germany will adopt the same methods against these Sabotage units of the British and their Allies; i.e. that, whenever they may appear, they shall be ruthlessly destroyed by the German troops.

3. I order, therefore:-

From now on all men operating against German troops in so-called Commando raids in Europe or in Africa, are to be annihilated to the last man. This is to be carried out whether they be soldiers in uniform, or saboteurs, with or without arms; and whether fighting or seeking to escape; and it is equally immaterial whether they come into action from Ships and Aircraft, or whether they land by parachute. Even if these individuals on discovery make obvious their intention of giving themselves up as prisoners, no pardon is on any account to be given. On this matter a report is to be made in each case to Headquarters for the information of Higher Command.

4. Should individual members of these Commandos, such as agents, saboteurs, etc., fall into the hands of the Armed Forces through any other means - as, for example, through the Police in one of the Occupied Territories - they are to be instantly handed over to the S.D.

To hold them in military custody - for example in P.O.W. Camps, etc., - even if only as a temporary measure, is strictly forbidden.

5. This order does not apply to the treatment of those enemy soldiers who are taken prisoner or give themselves up in open battle, in the course of normal operations, large scale attacks; or in major assault landings or airborne operations. Neither does it apply to those who fall into our hands after a sea fight, nor to those enemy soldiers who, after air battle, seek to save their lives by parachute.

6. I will hold all Commanders and Officers responsible under Miliary Law for any omission to carry out this order, whether by failure in their duty to instruct their units accordingly, or if they themselves act contrary to it.

(Sgd) A. Hitler

Cited on pp.159-160 in Messenger, Charles. The Commandos[:] 1940-1946. London: William Kimber, 1985.

CANADIAN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Based on two separate Department of National Defence press releases, at least fifteen Canadian newspapers carried feature stories regarding RCN Beach Commando "W" in their editions published respectively on or about April 22 and on or about August 12, 1944. In addition some thirty others ran one or other of the two stories, the April ones describing the Commando's training in Scotland and those of August its Normandy operations.

1. The following version of the April story appeared in the only Canadian francophone newspaper found covering it.

Le Droit, Ottawa, samedi, 22 avril 1944, 1ère page.

Commandos de la marine canadienne prêts à l'action.

UN PORT DU ROYAUME UNI, le 22. — (Spécial) —

Sous la tutelle de la Marine royale un groupe d'officiers et d'hommes d'équipage de la Marine royale canadienne, tous des volontaires, ont terminé leur d'entraînement de commandos. Ils sont le premier groupe de Canadiens [sic] à suivre ce cours de la Marine royale.

De leur centre d'entraînement, en Ecosse, ils ont été envoyés à un centre d'entraînement d'opérations combinées où ils travaillent avec des unités de l'Armée canadienne à bord de vaisseaux de débarquement. Ils seront attachés aux troupes de débarquement de l'Armée.

Un commando naval se distingue beaucoup d'un commando de l'Armée. Ce dernier est un spécialiste dans les combats armés et non armés; il est entraîné à se battre n'importe où et n'importe comment. Il est en de même du commando naval excepté qu'il ne quitte pas la tête de plage.

Les commandos navals débarquent avec les premières troupes et dirigent le reste de l'assaut. Pendant l'invasion, ils organisent la tête de plage en coopération étroite avec l'officier naval en charge du débarquement qui se tient au large avec les flotilles d'invasion. Puis, après avoir contrôlé les opérations sur la plage, ils y dirigent le trafic jusqu'à ce... [suite à la page treize]... qu'on trouve un port plus approprié au débarquement.

Ces marins canadiens sont prêts à tout: à vivre des jours et des jours sous le feu ennemi; à se nourrir de peu pendant des jours; à combattre et surtout à tenir.

C'est pourquoi, ici, en Ecosse, un dur d'entraînement les rend batailleurs et confiants en leurs forces. En effet, en Ecosse, le commando naval a appris à accoster son chaland de débarquement, à organiser la circulation et la défense de la plage selon les règles et à manoeuvrer toutes les catégories d'armes légères.

Ici, en Ecosse, dans l'un des plus beaux paysages du monde, les commandos de la Marine canadienne se sont exercés à disposer de leur ennemi doucement en silence dans des combats son [sic] armés. Au cours d'expéditions de plusieurs jours ils ont dormi à la belle étoile, ont fait leur propre cuisine et ont pris d'assaut des places fortes.

Les courses à obstacles ne leur offrent plus de surprise et leur initiative leur permet de traverser avec des moyens de fortune des rivières et des marais sous le feu ennemi le plus intense.

Ils sont fiers de porter l'insigne de leur métier sur leurs deux manches. Une insigne noire sur laquelle une ancre surmontée d'un aigle se détache en rouge. Une carabine traverse la verge de l'ancre. Au-dessus de cet insigne est écrit le mot "Canada" et un peu plus haut encore le mot "Commando". [N.B. Dans la phrase précédente, les mots "Canada" et "Commando" devraient échangés]

"Ces gars auront un rôle important à jouer dans l'invasion," déclare le lieutenant-commandant O'Hagan. "Ils tiendront la plage sur laquelle nos troupes et les matériaux de guerre seront débarqués. Ils seront de véritables officiers de port combattants."

2. Although no account of the August story has been found in the francophone press, three newspapers gave it not insignificant coverage, viz.:

a). Le Droit, Hull, samedi, 12 août, 1944 [première page, col.1-2]. (Consists of four captioned pictures)

b). La Presse, Montreal, samedi, 12 août, 1944 [première page, col.4-6]. (Consists of single captioned picture under heading "La Police de la Côte d'Invasion")

c). Le Soleil, Quebec, lundi, 14 août, 1944 [page neuf, col.3-5]. (Consists of single captioned picture under heading "LES COMMANDOS DE LA MARINE")

3. Representative of the anglophone newspapers which allotted major space to the April story was that carried on pages 1 & 4 in The Montreal Daily Herald for Saturday, April 22, 1944, which includes six captioned pictures on the first page.

Navy Commandos Train For Invasion

Training is Complete for Toughest Job.

A United Kingdom Port — Amidst the rugged loveliness of Scottish hills a group of Royal Canadian Navy officers and ratings, all of them volunteers, have completed training under Royal Navy tutelage for one of the toughest jobs the Navy has to offer. Now that their course is completed, they are Commandos, the first Canadians to take the Royal Navy's course as a group.

From their training centre in Scotland, these leather-tough Canadians have moved into a Combined Training Centre where they are working with units of the Canadian Army on landing craft flotillas. They are participating in Army manoeuvres and will be attached to Army beach troops, ready and hardened for the "Big Show".

A Navy Commando differs from an Army Commando. The Army Commando is a specialist in fighting with the hand-to-hand variety preferred; he fights anywhere. The Navy Commando dotes on fighting too, but he never leaves the beach which has been chosen for an assault landing. Rather, he defies the enemy to drive him from the beach.

The Naval Commando lands with the first wave of attacking troops and signals the remainder of the assault in. He helps to organize the beach for the landing of troops and material-bearing craft. It is his job, during an invasion, to work on the beach in close contact with the Naval officer who is in charge of the landing and who is standing off-shore with the assault flotillas. When the beachhead is established, he controls the traffic into and through the beach until a more suitable port for handling the incoming traffic is available.

The Canadian Navy "tough type" must be ready for anything. He must be prepared to spend days on a beach under enemy fire. He must learn to live on scanty rations and thrive on them. He must be prepared to fight and fight superlatively well to hold the beach on which he has been landed.

That's why the training he took at this centre in Scotland was aimed at making him tough, scrappy and self-reliant. He learned how to beach his landing craft correctly, how to organize a beach in Navy fashion, and how to handle all types of light weapons.

"He is a solider and a sailor too," says Lieutenant-Commander Dennis O'Hagan, R.C.N.V.R., of Halifax, N.S., principal Beach Master, who wears the George Medal and Bar for bravery on special duty. "The Commando receives a great deal of army training which ordinary sailors do not get and he learns to make himself comfortable almost any place and under almost any conditions."

Here in Scotland, amidst some of the loveliest scenery in the world, the Canadian Navy Commando has learned to kill swiftly and silently in unarmed combat classes. He has gone on days-long exercises under full kit: he has slept and cooked his meals in the open and was ready at the end of the gruelling manoeuvre to take prepared positions by assault. He still is.

He has smashed his way through obstacle courses and negotiated tough water hazards with powder and thunder flashes bursting around him and live ammunition cracking like a great whip lash over his head. He is now prepared to get soaked to the skin like a Spaniel and to work and fight that way for days on end if need be. He soon turned into a very tough guy.

The Canadian Navy Commando has learned to wear with pride the badge of his "trade" on both arms, a black flash and on it, in red, an anchor surmounted by a stooping eagle with a light machine gun crossing the anchor shank. Above the patch is the word "Canada" and above that again, "Commando." [N.B. In the preceding sentence, the words "Canada" and "Commando" should, in fact, be interchanged]

"These boys will have a big part to play in the coming invasion," says Lieutenant-Commander O'Hagan. "They will be the fighting handy-men on the beaches through which our troops and material will pour. They are fighting harbor masters, really."

The Montreal Daily Star.

THEATRES — BOOK REVIEWS
RADIO PROGRAMS

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1944

Tough, Eager Naval Commandos Await Invasion Order

Will Fight With Army Troops on Europe's Beaches

A UNITED KINGDOM PORT, April 22 — (Star Special) — Amidst the rugged loveliness of Scottish hills, a group of Royal Canadian Navy officers and ratings, all of them volunteers, have completed training under Royal Navy tutelage for one of the toughest jobs the Navy has to offer. Now that their course is completed, they are Commandos, the first Canadians to take the Royal Navy's Commando course as a group.

From their training centre in Scotland, these leather-tough Canadians have moved into a combined training centre where they are working with units of the Canadian Army on landing craft flotillas. They are participating in Army manoeuvres and will be attached to Army beach troops, ready and hardened for the "big show."

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* * *

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* * *

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"He is a soldier and a sailor too," says Lt.-Comdr. Dennis O'Hagan, R.C.N.V.R., of Halifax, N.S., the principal beach master, who wears the George Medal and Bar for bravery on special duty. "The Commando receives a great deal of Army training which ordinary sailors do not get and he learns to make himself comfortable almost any place and under almost any conditions."

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* * *

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"These boys will have a big part to play in the coming invasion," says Lieutenant-Commander O'Hagan. "They will be the fighting handy men on the beaches through which our troops and material will pour. They are fighting harbor masters, really."



NAVY COMMANDO: Lt. Gault Finley, of Montreal, who won his commission from the lower deck, is one of the Navy Commandos set to take part in the "big show" when it begins.



GETTING READY: Already veterans of the war at sea, these picked tars are putting finishing touches on their tough training to serve beside beach troops when the western front is opened.





PERSONAL COMEAT: Under the watchful eyes of a Royal Navy instructor, at the far end of the combatarms, men detached from other duties of the Royal Canadian Navy, above, work out at personal combat with vicious knives at a training school in Scotland. Right above, Ordinary Seaman Frank Albrechtson, of Montreal, shows how to incapacitate an opponent in unarmed combat.



Able Seaman Russel Nelson



Able Seaman Bill Burden

TOUGH AND READY: Seaman Burden, of Montreal, has been in the Navy a year and a half. Twelve months of the time he has served in landing craft and since then he has been getting ready to push ashore from those craft and meet the enemy face to face. Seaman Nelson, another Montrealer, has been in blue for two years, 18 months with landing craft. He too is ready for one of the toughest jobs the service can deal out.

CANADIAN NAVAL COMMANDOS IN TRAINING FOR THE 'BIG SHOW'



R.C.N. Photos by Lt. O. Mills, R.C.N.V.R.

Commandos of the Royal Canadian Navy will be side by side with beach troops of the army when the Allied invasion of Western Europe gets underway. The first group of these commandos has just completed the Royal Navy course at a training centre in Scotland and are now fit and ready for one of the toughest jobs the naval service can offer.

UPPER LEFT—Canadian Commandos pile out of a landing craft onto their beach objective in a dawn offensive. The beach landing was the opening curtain for a two-day exercise under full pack which took the Commandos far into the Scottish hills and ended with an assault on prepared positions.

UPPER RIGHT—**OS. FRANK ALBRECHTSON**, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal, demonstrates how to incapacitate an opponent during unarmed combat classes. His victim is **OS. H. D. SMITH**, of Toronto.

LOWER RIGHT—**LT. GAULT FINLEY**, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal, has been in the Royal Canadian Navy for three years. He earned his commission by way of the lower deck and finished King's College in May, 1943. He has seen service at sea in corvettes, minesweepers and M.L.'s.

LOWER CENTRE—**AB. RUSSELL NELSON**, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal. Of two years in the navy he has spent 18 months in landing craft in United Kingdom and six months with the Commandos.

LOWER LEFT—**AB. EARL JACKSON**, R.C.N.V.R., of Kingston, has served one year on the H.M.C.S. Elk, a converted yacht, before joining the new unit.

EXTREME LOWER RIGHT—At the conclusion of the manoeuvres, **AB. RONALD BARNES** of Vancouver, lights **PO. DOUGLAS McINTYRE'S** cigaret. The latter is from Sherbrooke, Que. In the background stand **AB. DOUGLAS KENNEDY** of Detroit, left and **AB. BILL BURDEN** of Montreal.

The Globe and Mail

ond Section TORONTO, SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1944.

vy Commandos 'Train Tough' to Seize and Hold Invasion Beaches







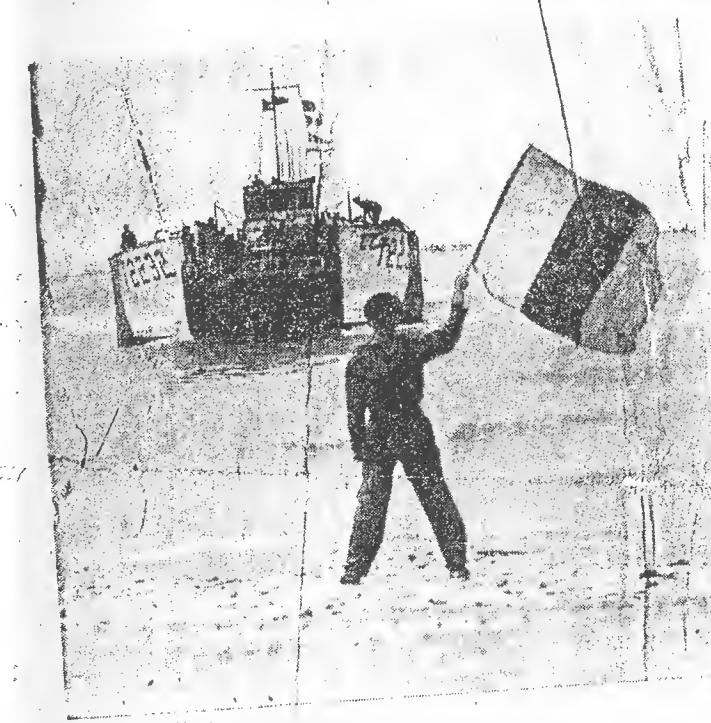
irst group of Canadians to complete Royal Navy commando
are seen in training (left) in Scotland, charging through simulated
oles and booby traps, while heavy powder charges explode around them. Badge (middle) combines eagle, anchor and light machine gun and is worn on both arms. Swift, silent kill is demonstrated by OD. Frank Albrechtson of Montreal on OD. H. D. Smith of Toronto.

to Cut Purchases

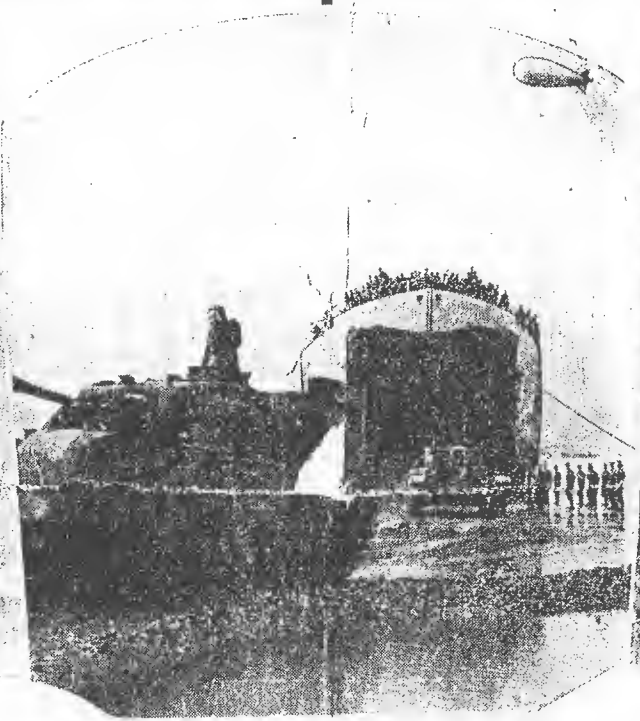
OTTAWA POLICY

Winning War Main Aim

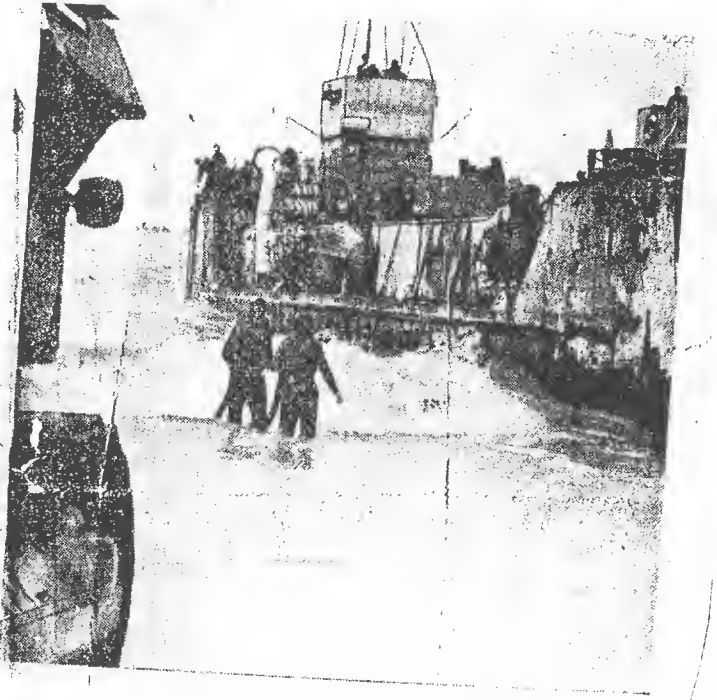
RCN Beach Commandos Do Superb Job Making Invasion "Go"



Beaching instructions are being passed to an approaching ship by this Royal Canadian Navy Beach Commando. This is part of their job of regulating invasion traffic and helping unload supplies for the fighting front.



A mighty Churchill tank rolls onto the beach as a second vehicle emerges from the landing craft. Fully-equipped troops crowd the forward part of the ship's deck as they await their turn to disembark.



Two Commandos plunge into the surf carrying a line to the stern of a vessel in danger of drifting and breaking up. The other end of the line is held by a 20-ton, tank-like beach machine that has no trouble steadying the ship.

4. The following story, written by Lt.Cdr. George Lawrence, RCNVR and issued by NSHQ (Information Section) on August 12, 1944, was carried in several Canadian newspapers.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: 10 a.m., E.D.T., SATURDAY AUGUST 12, 1944
By Lieut.Cdr. George Lawrence, R.C.N.V.R.

WITH THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY BEACH COMMANDOS IN FRANCE

Along these sloping sands a bunch of very tough young Canadians preside as traffic cops and trouble shooters over a scene that looks like a Buck Rogers dream.

Their job is to beach the ships and bring ashore and put together the jig-saw puzzle that is the thousands of men and thousands of pieces of equipment cut apart and loaded on the other side of the Channel.

The amazing part of this scene is the speed with which everything moves. Big ships with blunt prows come sliding to a stop, the prows flap open and the armor of war literally belches forth -- huge cruiser tanks, little tanks, armored cars, scout cars, jeeps, transports, ambulances -- a never ending variety. Soldiers come ashore in transport trucks that whip off a beach they have never seen before at 30 miles an hour.

In the midst of all this a few ships get into difficulty, and the great 20 and 30 ton monsters which are snorting about wallow into the sea and push them around like a child changing the course of a bathtub sailboat.

The beach looks, sometimes, chaotic. Seeing that it isn't, is the beach commando's job. And first responsibility falls on the officers of this super-trained lot.

In charge is Lieut. Cdr. Dennis J. Patrick O'Hagan, R.C.N.V.R., George Medal and Bar, whose home is in Halifax, and who won his decorations as one of the originals of a group of mine-disposal officers since described as "either decorated or dead". Second in charge is Lieut. Cmdr. R.J. "Dick" Johnstone, R.C.N.V.R., of Regina, brother of Surg. Capt. D.W. Johnstone, R.C.N.V.R., Senior Naval Medical Officer on the Atlantic Coast. Under them are nine other R.C.N.V.R. officers: Lieut. Don Sutherland, 340 Main St.,N. Weston,(Toronto); Lieut. A.D. Rayburn, Calgary; Lieut. Forrest Angus, Victoria; Lieut. E.G. Finley, Lieut. G. Hampson, and Lieut. J. Vaillancourt, all of Montreal; Lieut. J.B. Cronin, Vancouver; Lieut. C.B. Christie, Amherst, N.S.; and Lieut. Jack Bentley, Saskatoon.

Here's how they bring your army and air force personnel and their equipment ashore on the beaches of France, for each beachhead organization is similar. Each beachhead has a principal beachmaster -- Lieut. Cmdr. O'Hagan here; he has a deputy --Lieut. Cmdr. Johnstone. The beachhead has three sectors under beachmasters -- Rayburn, Sutherland and Angus -- and the other officers and men are divided into three parties under them. The ships lay off shore on arrival waiting instructions that are based on tide, weather, enemy action, and a score of other reasons. Once ashore their cargo of humans or supplies goes out by three main exits, one for personnel, one for wheeled and another for tracked vehicles.

It sounds simple, but it isn't. Take, for instance, the day our beachhead was narrowed by enemy minefields. There was an urgent demand for certain supplies anchored offshore. There was a choppy sea and a crosswind. The ships had to be laid side by side, dangerously close, their bows on the beach and their stern held only by the kedge anchor they drop just before they hit the shore.

Suddenly the stern anchor cable on one broke. In a moment it was drifting to a crash with the craft alongside. Then there roared into action a 20-ton armour-plated water-sealed monster with a snub bumper nose. It plunged into the sea, met the ship coming round, and calmly proceeded to push it back to sea again. "The crew were all leaning over the side, and the officers, waiting for the crash", chuckled Petty Officer Douglas MacIntyre of Sherbrooke, Que. "Brother, you should have seen the look on their faces when we started pushing them around!"

Sometimes the tossing of the sea jams heavy tanks in the holds of the landing ships. Then through the yawning bow mouth of the long ship is run a wire cable, and a beach engine on the sandy shore digs in its tracks and tugs, for all the world like a little bulldog that has a line down the gullet of some sea monster. By sheer force the tanks are freed. Sometimes a vehicle will bog down. And if it isn't convenient to pull it out, there's a huge crane that will amble over and quietly lift it out and set it down somewhere else.

They have a return traffic, too. A different kind of traffic, and they're always looking for one of those friends they greeted coming in -- and this, the wounded, is the harsh cut in an exhilarating job of action. They bring them down in ambulances each evening. They come from all near-by fronts, and you'll find men of many nations among them -- French patriots and civilians, German wounded, a few Poles, Czechs, Dutch, Belgians -- they've been conscripted into Hitler's labor corps and abandoned by the ruthless Hun.

They load the stretchers on ducks. The duck is a big flat-bottomed car which floats and has a propellor and a rudder. It runs smoothly across the beach, noses into the water and up the great ramps of tank-landing ships.

Then there are the prisoners. They come down in the evening, too, in a great herd of greenish-grey uniforms -- always an intensely interesting study in human reactions; some furtive and afraid; some boldly arrogant; some disinterested, their thoughts obviously far away, in a spot called home; some frankly curious. Most of them are very old or very young. Like all other traffic on this busy beach they don't linger long -- they go aboard a ship and the beach commandos go on to other things.

The merry young Canadian beach commandos eat bully beef and canned stew and sling their hammocks at night in a vaunted west wall fort from which Germans peered across the channel for three years.

They haven't even bothered to move the field gun whose snout sticks out in the seaward end of the huge steel and concrete box which the Hun built into a sandy bluff. In fact some of the lads use the gun carriage to sling hammocks, and hook the other end of the "mick" into the steel reinforcement girders bared of their concrete by Canadian tank shells still buried where they struck.

They take the long way around the bluff above the fort because there's a sign on the top which says -- with a huge skull and crossbones in the centre -- "Achtung! Minen!" That means, they explain, that there are plenty of minefields about, but that the Germans were ousted so swiftly they didn't have time to remove the warning signs placed for their own troops and the civilian population. So it is perfectly safe.

Not all of the boys were lucky enough to find themselves west wall forts to live in, and the result has been an assorted group of tents, dugouts and hastily constructed kitchens which look very much like a 'hoboes' shacktown. For from the moment they landed on the beach the commandos had to fend for themselves -- they had to find their own places to cook, eat, sleep and relax in their spare time.

Lieut. A.D. Rayburn of Winnipeg was one of the luckiest. He found a tiny German dugout lined with foot-thick concrete. Three other officers counted a barrage balloon brought down and irreparably damaged by flak a stroke of luck -- and made a very fine tent out of it. They are Lieutenants Don Sutherland of Toronto, Forrest Angus of Victoria, and C.B. Christie of Amherst, N.S.

Two French-Canadian lads have a subterranean retreat that is fitted out palatially -- if you can overlook the bare sand walls and floor. They have made shelves and niches, have "scrounged" comfortable beds, and salvaged abandoned life jackets from the beaches to make air pillows. They are A.B. Paul de Montigny and A.B. Lucien Quesnel of Montreal. Montigny, who is a bit tall, has dug out a bit of extra foot room out of the wall at the end of his bed.

A.B. Reg. Burse of Hamilton, Ontario, constructed himself a dugout of solitary grandeur and named it "Little Hamilton". Four other lads have a shack of some proportions, built with pieces of broken boats and wrecked vehicles, which is dubbed "Canada House".

"It is just like being on a holiday," says Commando Joseph Adams of Belleville, Ontario, "We're all having the time of our lives -- a glorified camping trip. Except I'm the cook!"

Food, Adams points out, makes or breaks a camp. And so every member of the group has become an unofficial "scrounger" to vary the monotony of the otherwise very excellent "Compo" rations -- all tinned food, stew, soup, canned puddings, and so on. Usually extra food comes from the galleys of ships coming in to the beachhead, whose officers realize the conditions ashore are rather primitive. Fresh bread and fresh meat are "prizes beyond compare".

The commandos have no cook. "Somebody just gets browned off", Adams explains, "and I'm it." Every member of the unit, however, has been trained how to make a tasty meal -- if necessary out of limited rations, and anyone may be called upon to take a turn in the galley. Sharing the galley duties with Adams are A.B. Joseph Roy, Moncton; A.B. John Ross, Owen Sound; A.B. George Stone, Winnipeg; A.B. Harold Steele, Tamworth, Ontario; and A.B. John Jones of Picton, Ontario.

It is strictly an outdoor life, and the amazing sight of a hotly-contested football or softball game on the hard beach sands, among the huge beached transports, has become commonplace. For these super-trained commandos, whose average age is about 21, have a lot of energy to work off. That department comes under Petty Officer Douglas McIntyre of Sherbrooke, Que., navy physical training instructor.

"Even though the lads have a lot of work to do they've also got to keep themselves in shape", he says. "So we give them livening up exercises to keep them sharp, and exercise to keep their muscles hard. They have softball, volleyball, football, swimming, boxing and wrestling. And believe me, they are tough and healthy lads!"

Which brings them back to Adams for something to eat. "I know they're tough and healthy", he mutters, "You can't ever fill them!"

BIOGRAPHETTES

The hundred and three names which appear below constitute all those who officially served at one time or another in RCN Beach Commando "W". The information shown for each name has been obtained from four main sources:

1. National Archives of Canada military records, 1942-45;
2. Some six dozen Canadian newspapers, 1942-1945;
3. Communications since 1988 (via such means as letters, oral conversations, telephone calls) with particular individual, his next-of-kin, and/or third parties.
4. Author's personal letters written home, 1943-45.

If an individual(or next-of-kin)'s address was known, a copy of the proposed biographical sketch was mailed to them in the summer of 1993 for amendment and approval.

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2.



4.



1. **ADAMS, Joseph Patrick ("Joe").** V.31229. A/LS. W-2. Born in Belleville, Ont., July 11, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Postwar worked at Northern Telecom for almost thirty years, taking early retirement in 1981 due to physical disability. Married Audrey Tebworth in 1949 and as of 1992 they had two grandchildren by their daughter (and only child).

2. **ALBRECHTSON, Francis Conrad ("Frank").** V.61185. A/AB. W-1. Born in Montreal, May 24, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Postwar worked for twenty-seven years at Northern Telecom, retiring in 1971 as production manager at the Point St. Charles plant in Montreal. Moved to Laurentians, and as of 1993 lives in St. Sauveur, P.Q.. Former vice-president & service officer, Branch 171, Royal Canadian Legion, Morin Heights, P.Q., for whose "museum" he has been largely responsible over the years in acquiring a sizable collection of Canadian Army regimental badges. Has two sons and two daughters.

3. **ALLEN, J.** V.49877. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

4. **ANGUS, Forrest ("Forrie").** O-2340. Lt. Beachmaster, W-3. Born in Victoria, August 9, 1919; deceased September 22, 1991. Before December 1943 appointment as Assistant Beachmaster for W-3, had been in corvette HMCS Cobalt. Replaced Lt. Hatch at the end of May 1944 as Beachmaster, W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22. Prior to January 16, 1946 demobilization, was Asdic officer aboard corvette HMCS Smiths Falls. Four brothers also enlisted in RCNVR. Married Patricia ("Patsy") Beard of Victoria on May 31, 1947: three sons and six grandchildren. Worked thirty years in his family's West Coast automotive engines and parts business. After 1975 retirement, "bought a boat and enjoyed cruising on the Coast." As part of the subsequent purchase of some recreational property came an old Land-Rover, prompting him to relive and retell several 1943-44 driving escapades, including the week he and Lt. Rayburn (BM, W-2) spent touring around England in the jeep they had commandeered in Normandy and managed to bring back to the UK, visiting old friends and out-of-the-way places, eventually landing up in Ardentinny, Scotland where, because "Benghazi Bill" (CO, HMS Armadillo) declined to accept the jeep as a gift, they were finally obliged to simply abandon it. In postwar years, became member of and generously supported the Royal Naval Commando Association.

5. **ARMSTRONG, C.** V.61150. OD. W-? Drafted from "W" in March 1944.

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11.



13.



14.



15.



6. **BARNES, Ronald V.** V.47862. AB. W-2. Home town -- Vancouver. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

7. **BECKMAN, K.** V.65150. OD. W-? Drafted from "W" in March 1944.

8. **BENTLEY, Jack ('Bangalore').** O-6020. Lt. Administration & Stores officer. Born about 1910 in Saskatoon. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944. Prior to his demobilization on August 31, 1945, saw service in frigate, HMCS Cap-de-la-Madeleine. Postwar rejoined Sherwin Williams Paints as one of their Ontario region sales representatives.

9. **BURDEN, William A. ('Bill').** V.43750. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, served on landing craft in Mediterranean. Drafted from "W" in June, 1944.

10. **BURSE, Reginald Clarence ('Reg').** V.48280. A/AB. W-1. Born in Burlington, Ont., August 19, 1922 and died there on November first, 1993. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. 1947-82 with Procter & Gamble in Hamilton. Married Catherine Mary DeMonines ("Kay") in December 1945 and since 1946 they have lived in Burlington.

11. **BYER, Cecil.** V.54476. A/AB. W-3. Home town -- Vancouver. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

12. **BYERS, H.** V.34795. AB. W-3. Returned to landing craft prior to June 6, 1944 Normandy invasion.

13. **CALER, J.** V.46031. AB. W-3. Home town -- Halifax. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

14. **CAMPBELL, Louis Oliver ('Ollie').** O-11800. Lt. Beachmaster, W-3. Left "W" early in 1944 for duty at Portsmouth as Canadian Liaison officer to Force "J". Following demobilization in October 1945, at some point he did publicity work for the Saskatchewan Government, working out of Regina. Subsequently returned to his native province of Quebec where he died around 1989.

15. **CASBOURNE, James Clifton ('Molson').** V.56832. A/AB. W-1. Born in Lachine, P.Q., August 25, 1923. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944. Retired from Dominion Engineering Works, Lachine, in 1984 after forty-one years as a pipe fitter. Married Violet Wood (1919-1992) on August

16.



17.



18.



19.



20.



11, 1945. One son, Tom, and two grandchildren.

16. **CHRISTIE, Charles Black ("Charlie").** O-13770. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in Amherst, N.S. in 1912 and died there on August 1, 1993. Prior to his July 7, 1944 appointment to "W" as replacement for Lt. J.R. Cunningham, had been "guns" aboard HMCS Teme which, a few days after D-DAY, lost several crew members on being almost cut in half by an RN escort carrier in the Bay of Biscay. While serving in Normandy (July 7 to August 22, 1944), happened to run across his brother Hugh, an RCAMC doctor with the Winnipeg Rifles. Upon "W"'s disbandment, was appointed to frigate HMCS Ribble which shortly afterwards sank a German U-Boat off Land's End. In 1945 had a full naval wedding ceremony, marrying RCN Nursing Sister Thelma Victoria Grose who was born near Fergus, Ont., grew up in Swift Current, Sask., graduated from the Toronto General, and during the war served in three RCN hospitals. Back on "civvy street", Charlie worked in and eventually ran the family luggage and coffin business, selling it off and retiring around 1970. They raised two sons and, as of 1994, Thelma lives in Amherst.

17. **CRONIN, John Bernard ("Jack").** O-16890. A/Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Home town -- Saskatoon. Prior to joining "W" in May 1944, was 1st Lt., LCI(L) #250. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Canadian Naval Lists show him subsequently aboard the corvette HMCS Thorlock from October 25 to December 20, on strength of HMCS Scotian and then HMCS Cornwallis during the first half of 1945, and finally demobilized as of July 18.

18. **CRONKHITE, Winston F. ("Frank").** V.61557. AB. W-2. Born in Fredericton, September 24, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. After discharge from RCNVR, took upholstery course in Moncton and eventually, under the name of Cronkhite Upholsterers, ran his own business on Yonge Street in Toronto. Deceased in 1988. His widow, Virginia, who came from Woodstock, N.B., lives (as of 1993) in Thornhill, Ont..

19. **CROUGH, Raymond ("Mother").** V.19467. AB. W-1. Home town -- in Western Canada. Drafted to General Service in mid-July 1944.

20. **CROWHURST, Kenneth Guy ("Tarzan" or "Crow").** O-17120. Lt. Born in Chapleau, Ont., November 5, 1918. Joined Army in 1940. After 6-month A/S course in 1941, transferred to Navy and served in HMCS Swift Current and HMCS Kamloops as asdic operator. Commissioned S/Lt. in 1942 and

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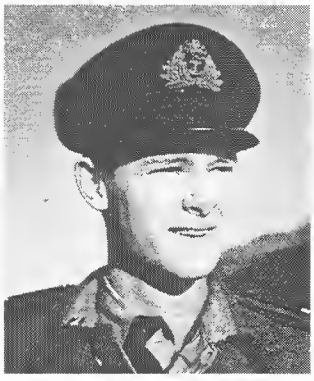
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promoted to Lt. the next year on being appointed Assistant Beachmaster of W-1. Shortly after D-Day, he became Beachmaster in charge of landing craft for LSI, HMCS Prince David, which later took part in Allied landings in Southern France, Albania, Greece, and Crete. Before his October 25, 1945 demobilization, spent five months in corvette HMCS Sudbury and earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate. As a 1949 university science graduate in forestry, his career divided into two phases -- a dozen years based in Auden as logging superintendent with Abitibi and then, from 1961-85, as a biology teacher at Hillcrest High School in Thunder Bay, Ont.. Married on April 24, 1943 to Margaret Helen Pearce of Redvers, Sask., they have three daughters and four grandchildren, and live in Thunder Bay. His retirement interests are "mostly hunting & fishing, camping, gardening, and calligraphy".

21. **CUNNINGHAM, John Ritchie ("Cut").** O-14270. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Home town -- Vancouver. Earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after serving throughout 1942 in corvette HMCS Chambly and then six months in corvette HMCS Kincardine. Joined "W" at the end of June 1944 as replacement for Lt. R.I. Shales, ABM, W-2. Being himself replaced within a week by Lt. C.B. Christie, he subsequently went on to spend the better part of a year in Canadian MTBs. Following demobilization in September 1945, became a lawyer three years later and in 1990 was a partner at Campney & Murphy in Vancouver, practicing in all aspects of maritime law.

22. **DEMONTIGNY, Paul.** V.50928. AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

23. **DERUCHIE, L.** V.4365. AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

24. **DOWNEY, Vincent Joseph ("Vince").** V.57751. A/AB. W-2. Home town -- Hamilton. Hospitalized for hernia operation just before "W" proceeded to Normandy in July 1944.

25. **FAUBERT, Paul Louis.** V.44355. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

26. **FINLEY, Eric Gault ("Skip").** O-23710. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-1. Born in Montreal, January 14, 1923. Before December 1943 appointment to "W", earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after fifteen months in minesweeper, fairmile, and corvette. Served in Normandy, July 16 to 26, 1944; air-evacuated to UK after receiving shrapnel head wound on July 23

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near Bernières-sur-mer and being operated on at #6 MNSU near Bayeux. Discharged (medically unfit) in February 1945. Postwar career in education. Married Catherine Rae Hunter of Montreal on June 25, 1949. They have three daughters and one son, four grandchildren as of 1993, and live in Ottawa.

27. **FLEMMING, M.** V.42327. AB. W-3. Joined "W" in April 1944 as replacement for "assault course casualty" F.J. Gamblin, AB.

28. **FORSYTH, John Edward.** V.10963. A/LS. W-2. Home town -- Regina. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

29. **FOX, John Lloyd ("Jack").** V.57307. A/AB. W-1. Born in Wallaceburg, Ont., on October 18, 1923 and died there on March 21, 1986. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. After being demobilized on March 19, 1945, he worked in construction with his father John. Married to Marion Alberta Frewing, July 31, 1945, they had a daughter and two sons and six grandchildren.

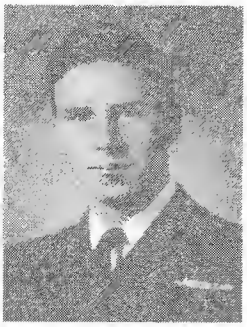
30. **GAMBLIN, Frederick James ("Fred").** V.59716. AB. W-3. Born in Sussex, N.B., on July 27, 1924. Served in "W" from November 6, 1943 to April 10, 1944, at which time, having suffered a broken wrist while undergoing training on an assault course, he was replaced by M. Flemming, AB. Spent eight months patrolling English Channel in HMCS Moose Jaw prior to returning to Canada for discharge on November 5, 1945. Drove truck (1945-47) and bus (1947-53) before joining Saint John Fire Department, from which he retired as a Captain in 1988. Married to Mary Horncastle, September 23, 1950, they have two sons and two grandsons.

31. **GERMAINE, A.** V.38689. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

32. **GOODWIN, Dennis Charles.** V.62012. AB. W-2. Born in Lorneville, N.S., March 16, 1925. Appointed to "W" six months after May 1943 enlistment. Drafted to HMCS Niobe prior to "W"'s July/August 1944 stint in Normandy. Served aboard HMCS Chaudière, a River Class destroyer, until being discharged in October 1945. He and his wife Roberta have two children and live in Moncton, N.B..

33. **GREENWOOD, D.** V.61245. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

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34. **HAMPSON, Harold George.** O-30400. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in Montreal on December 2, 1922; died on January 23, 1992 in Ottawa. Prior to joining "W" in March 1944, had been on landing craft and with RN Beach Commando units in the Mediterranean, being "mentioned in despatches" for his part in extinguishing fires aboard an Allied freighter. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following his January 1945 naval discharge ("medically unfit"), he earned a Master's degree in history at McGill University. Married Eve J. Osler of Montreal in September 1951, subsequently having two sons and a daughter, and, as of 1992, four grandchildren. Retired from the Federal Government in 1977 after a twenty-five year career, seventeen of them with External Affairs. During his post-war life, he became a keen and accomplished mountain-climber.

35. **HARDING, C.** V.61890. A/AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

36. **HARRINGTON, J.** V.16892. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

37. **HATCH, Carr.** O-31610. Lt. Beachmaster, W-2. Home town -- Toronto. Prior to joining "W", earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after serving ten months in destroyers (HMCS Niagara and HMCS Waskesiu). Initially W-2 BM, he took over W-3 on Lt. L.O. Campbell's departure from the Commando. Ordered at the end of May 1944 to report to CNMO in London, Hatch was appointed to Canadian MTB #460 in mid-June. On October 16 NSHQ accepted his resignation from the RCNVR.

38. **HAY, R.** V.45449. A/LS. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

39. **HILDRETH, C. ("Clem").** V.64412. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

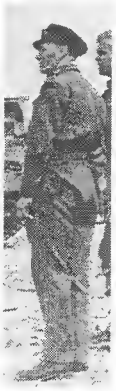
40. **HOREL, J.** V.45584. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

41. **JACKSON, Earl.** V.44344. A/LS. W-3. Home town -- Kingston. Was in HMCS Elk, a converted yacht, before joining Commandos. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

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42. **JARRETT, George.** A.2635. A/PO. W-1. Home town -- Toronto. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

43. **JOHNSTONE, Richard John ("Dick").** O-37140. A/Lt.Cr. Deputy Principal Beachmaster and Commanding Officer of "W". Born on June 4, 1912 in Regina where he worked prewar as a journalist. By 1940 he was a Lt. carrying out Naval Control Service duties in HMCS Protector at Sydney, N.S.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. When "W" disbanded, he was appointed Canadian Naval Liaison Officer at Milford Haven and, upon demobilization in September 1945, returned to general journalism in Western Canada. A long career writing for Imperial Oil ended with his 1977 retirement. He resides in Calgary.

44. **JONES, John ("Jack").** V.42208. AB. W-3. Home town -- Picton, Ont. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

45. **JONES, Robert.** V.841. A/LS. W-3. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

46. **JOYCE, John.** A.4140. A/LS. W-1. Home town -- Saint John. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Drowned some years after the end of the war in Bay of Fundy tugboat accident.

47. **JOYES, W.F.** V.17772. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

48. **KENNEDY, Douglas.** V.41864. AB. W-2. Home town -- Detroit. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

49. **KING, J.** V.51758. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

50. **KNIGHT, N.** V.54536. AB. W-1. Joined "W" in June 1944 as replacement for G. Winn, AB. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

51. **KOCH, L.** V.51953. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

52. **KROSHEWSKY, Daniel ("Dan").** V.64415. AB. W-2. Born in Calgary, November 23, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Ice-maker at HMCS Peregrine hockey arena in Halifax for 1944-45 winter

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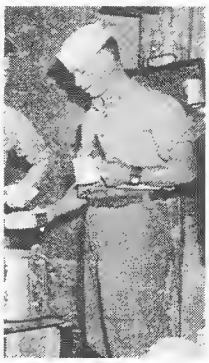
season. Coxswain of HMCS Protector harbour defence craft for six months prior to November 21, 1945 discharge. During a 1946 visit to the United States he became drafted into the U.S. Army and subsequently graduated as a paratrooper at Fort Benning. From 1947 to 1980 worked for Imperial Oil (on drilling rigs, as refinery technician, and as shift supervisor). Married Vera Friedenberg of Leduc, Alberta on August 27, 1949; now live in Edmonton. They have a son and two daughters and, as of 1992, five grandchildren. In World War I his father spent three years overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and saw action at Vimy Ridge. During World War II three brothers were wounded while serving with the Canadian Army in Italy; one was repatriated but the other two later also took part in the Northwest Europe campaign.

53. **LUFF, Charles R.** V.56817. AB. W-2. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

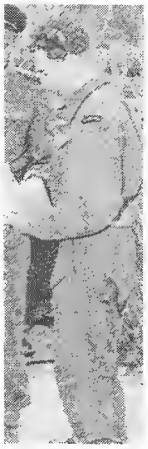
54. **MACBETH, John Kenneth ("Jack").** O-43440. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Born in Detroit in 1921, moving to Toronto at an early age; deceased on September 16, 1991. Spent eighteen months in HMCS Eyebright on North Atlantic convoy duty and earned a WK (watchkeeping) certificate prior to taking Long "n" (navigation course) and subsequently being appointed Assistant Squadron Officer for Canadian LCI(L)s in November 1943. The next month he transferred to "W" but, after injuring himself during training in May 1944, he reverted back to General Service and became navigating officer first in HMCS Trentonian and then in HMCS New Glasgow until his demobilization on August 13, 1945. Postwar career mainly in journalism (e.g. as AP correspondent covered the December 1950 U.S. Martines retreat from the Changjin Reservoir in Korea), Federal Government contracts (e.g. Executvie assistant to the Honourable Judy Lemarsh when she was Secretary of State in the Trudeau Cabinet), and free lance writing (e.g. Ready, Aye, Ready: An Illustrated History of the Royal Canadian Navy, published in 1989 by Key Porter Books). His own favorite personal anecdote recounted a 1954 solo trip by jeep around the West coast of Africa dressed, when in Arab states, as an Arab. Hoping to eventually reach the Mediterranean Sea, his vehicle broke down completely in the middle of the Sahara Desert when he, his parrot, and his monkey were eventually rescued by some itinerant Bedouins. He fell in love with British Columbia and lived alone in rustic cabins far removed from the urban rat-race.

55. **MACDONALD, William Melville.** O-44030. Lt.Cr. Principal Beachmaster "W". Home town -- Montreal. Enlisted in 1940 and served in various Canadian shore establishments for more than three years before

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being appointed RCN Beach Commando's PBM on November 20, 1943. Replaced in December 1943 by A/Lt.Cr. D.J.P. O'Hagan, his resignation from the RCNVR was accepted by NSHQ on February 29, 1944.

56. **MACINTYRE, Alfred P.** V.55697. AB. W-2. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

57. **MADDEN, G.** V.24212. AB. W-3. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

58. **MANTAIS, L.** V.60982. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

59. **McINTYRE, Douglas E.** V.5747. A/PO. W-2. Home town -- Sherbrooke, P.Q.. Served from July 13 to August 22, 1944 in Normandy where, whenever circumstances permitted, he directed "W"'s PT and recreational activities. Employed postwar for several years by British Columbia Department of Fisheries at Powell River. Married with a son and a daughter. Deceased in early 1980s; his widow Sandra lives on Savary Island, B.C..

60. **MORRIS, Arthur Edward ("Art").** V.38938. OD. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

61. **MURPHY, Donald S.** V.2980. AB. W-3. Home town -- Fredericton. Joined "W" in June 1944 as replacement for H. Byers, AB. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

62. **MURPHY, William Robert ("Bill" or "Spud").** V.5392. A/LS. W-2. Born in Port Arthur, Ont., March 11, 1920. Joined Naval Reserve in 1937. Active service commenced September 4, 1939 and two days later began a three and a half year stint in HMCS Saguenay. Appointed to "W" in November 1943 and served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Prior to his discharge on October 26, 1945, he spent ten weeks aboard HMCS Uganda. Married in Naval Chapel, HMCS Cornwallis, to Alice Ann Delaney (of Moncton) on February 3, 1945; now live in Verdun, P.Q.. They have three daughters and, as of 1992, two grandchildren. Enjoyed lengthy period of employment with Northern Telecom. Five brothers also saw service in RCNVR. Actively supports Montreal branch of veterans White Ensign association.

63. **MURRAY, Harold ("Tiny").** V.19196. AB. W-1. Home town -- Sarnia, Ont.. Prior to joining "W" in June 1944 as replacement for J. Skinner, AB,

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had been on landing craft in Mediterranean. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

64. **NELSON, Russell Charles ("Russ").** V.38716. AB. W-2. Born in Montreal, November 2, 1924. Enlisted in July 1942 and spent about a year with RN and RCN landing craft in the Mediterranean before joining "W" at the end of 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Employed as an auditor by Bell Canada for forty-two years, being stationed at one time in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Retirement came in 1987. Married Jean Lancaster of Montreal in 1959. They have a son and a daughter and live in Toronto.

65. **NEWELL, William ("Bill").** V.57709. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Tillsonburg, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

66. **OFFLESS, J.** V.37973. AB. W-2. Home town -- Brantford, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

67. **O'HAGAN, Denis James Patrick.** O-56170. A/Lt.Cr., George Medal and bar. In December 1944 replaced W.M. Macdonald, Lt.Cr., as Principal Beachmaster, "W". Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Lived postwar in Halifax with wife Patricia. Managed Forsyth Men's Shop from at least 1953 to 1955, and was later employed as an inspector with the Provincial Department of Fisheries.

68. **PENDLEBURY, Arthur ("Art").** V.56436. A/AB. W-1. Came from Nova Scotia. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

69. **PETTY, Arthur Henry ("Art").** V.54229. AB. W-2. Born on April 27, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Employed variously in electrical field, service industry, and for a company dealing in china (dishes) replacement. Retired in 1990. Married Elizabeth ("Betty") in 1947; they have five daughters and live in Toronto.

70. ***PLATJOUW, Joseph ("Joe").** V.46327. A/LS. W-1. Born in Wallaceburg, Ont., March 31, 1922. Served as PBM's bodyguard in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following 1945 discharge, worked for twenty-five years in various Canadian and American locations mainly as a die-caster, retiring in 1988. His wife died in 1989; they had no children. He lives in Greenville, Michigan, busies himself as a handyman, and maintains his membership in the Wallaceburg branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.
*(Some of his RCNVR records misspell his surname as PLAYTOUW).

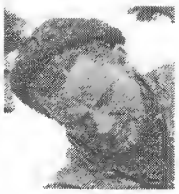
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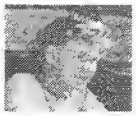
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71. **QUESNEL, Joseph Louis Robert Lucien.** V.39610. AB. W-3. Born in Montreal, August 19, 1924. Had sea time experience in minesweeper HMCS Fundy before joining "W" in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Spent several weeks aboard frigate HMCS Wentworth prior to his discharge on August 23, 1945. Entire career as postman. Lucille Morrison of Montreal, his first wife, died in 1974; they had one son. His second wife, Lillianne Jolicoeur Trudel, who had three children from a previous marriage, passed away in 1980. He subsequently married Ethel Miller Lewis, a widow with two children and they now live in Ste. Thérèse, P.Q.. For many years Lucien has been an active member and office holder in the Combined Operations sub-division of the Royal Canadian Naval Association.

72. **RAYBURN, A. Dudley.** O-61310. Lt. Beachmaster, W-2. Born around 1910 in Kidder, North Dakota, moving to Calgary as a youngster. Joined Canadian Naval Reserve in 1925. Training Officer in HMCS Chippawa (Winnipeg) for a year before appointment as BM for W-2 on December 1, 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Spent nine months aboard frigate HMCS Sussexvale and earned a WK (watchkeeping) certificate prior to being demobilized as of September 25, 1945. Rejoined RCN(R) the following year as Staff Officer, Sea Cadets at HMCS Tecumseh (Calgary), and in 1949 became a Lt.Cdr.. After completing part of a 3-year Short Service Appointment, he was "honourably released" from the Navy on May 25, 1952.

73. **READ, John ("Jack").** V.45963. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Niagara Falls, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

74. **RENNIE, F.** V.61476. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

75. **ROSS, John Dayton ("Salty").** V.59089. AB. W-2. Born on April 10, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following 1945 discharge, reentered Great Lakes Shipping where he had been a deckhand before enlisting in the RCNVR. Over the years he advanced from helmsman, through the three Mate levels, and right up to Captain. In 1989 he retired from the Great Lakes Pilotage Authority as a Marine Pilot and also holding the rank of Ship's Master. Attended May 1993 Calgary RCNA (Combined Operations) reunion. Died November 29, 1993 while vacationing in Florida: his wife predeceased him. They had four daughters and six grandchildren.

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76. **ROY, Joseph Felix ("Joey").** V.58383. AB. W-2. Home town -- Moncton, N.B.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

77. **SAUVÉ, I.** V.4520. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

78. **SHALES, Robert Irwin ("Bob").** V.17829. AB. O-66130. A/Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in London, England, September 20, 1921. Enlisted in RCNVR in 1940, serving first as "buffer" aboard corvette HMCS Dawson and then as training officer, HMCS Queen at Regina, before his appointment to "W" in December 1943. Following convalescence after breaking both heels in June 1944, he served on the frigate HMCS Teme until, as a result of being "fished" and severely damaged off Falmouth in the English Channel on March 29, 1945, she had to be towed into port. Returning to Canada and civvy street six months later, he went on to earn a Commerce degree and establish his own real estate and mortgage brokerage company in Toronto, retiring in 1981. Married Claire A. Dibble, June 5, 1948; they have a daughter and a son, and live in Toronto.

79. **SKINNER, James ("Jimmy").** V.57957. AB. W-1. Home town -- Strathroy, Ont.. Due to illness in June 1944, drafted from "W' and replaced by H. Murray, AB.

80. **SMILEY, Delbert William ("Del").** V.37293. A/LS. W-1. Born in Didsbury, Alberta, January 6, 1923. Underwent ten months training on RN Combined Operations landing craft before joining "W' in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Married back in Canada on November 24, 1944, a year prior to his discharge; they have four children and live in Nelson, B.C..

81. **SMITH, Haydon Dawson ("Smitty").** V.51476. A/AB. W-1. Born in Toronto, December 4, 1923; deceased July 13, 1992. Served in Normandy July 7 to August 22, 1944. Discharged from Navy on December 27, 1945 and the following day married CWAC Sheila Breen of St. John's, Newfoundland. Postwar worked in his father's Toronto retail shoe store, becoming owner in 1954 and retiring thirty-five years later at which time he listed his hobbies as "cottaging around Lindsay, Ont., reading, woodworking, and grandchildren." Three daughters and five "grands".

82. **SMITH, Irving A. ("Big Smith").** A.1702. A/PO. W-3. Home town -- Joggins Mines, N.S.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

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83. **SMITH, Robert E. ("Bob").** V.41800. AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

84. **STEEL, Harold.** V.40651. AB. W-1. Home town -- Tamworth, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

85. **STONE, George.** V.59719. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

86. **SUTHERLAND, Donald Marshall ("Don").** O-71250. Lt. Beachmaster, W-1. Born in Toronto, June 22, 1916. Enlisted as OD in 1940, subsequently taking officer training in HMS King Alfred and serving for three years with the Royal Navy. Rescued by corvette HMCS Morden when S.S. Winnipeg, on which he was taking passage back to Canada for Foreign Service leave, was torpedoed and sunk in mid-Atlantic on October 22, 1942. Following a stint as "Jimmy" (i.e. First Lieutenant) at HMCS Niobe, he joined "W" Commando in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Subsequently became Staff Officer (Operational Intelligence) at CNMO, attaining rank of Lt.Cr. (S.B.). Demobilized as of October 31, 1945. Three years after university studies and graduation (1945-51), he began a twenty-seven year career in book publishing (viz. Oxford University, Macmillan, and McGill-Queens) and helped compose the text for The Canadian Raleighites, edited by E.C. O'Neill and published in 1988 by Waterloo. Married Gwen Evans on June 27, 1952; they have four children and four "grands" and live in Toronto. As retirement interests, hobbies, and activities, he lists hiking & field studies with plant taxonomy; Scottish country-dancing; cross-country skiing; literature & writing; music, theatre; genealogy. Has been an active member in and the "W" Commando contact for the UK-based Royal Naval Commando Association.

87. **SUTHERLAND, J.** V.57957. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

88. **TAPPER, H.** V.60681 (or V.60631). OD. W-3. Came from Newfoundland. Due to prolonged disability was replaced in March 1944 by L. Westerman, OD.

89. **THACKER, Archibald. ("Archie").** V.1434. PO. W-2. Home town -- Charlottetown. Four years in Navy with sea time in minesweepers and corvettes before draft to beach commandos. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

90.



91.



92.



93.



95.



96.



90. **THERIEN, Armand.** V.31372. AB. W-1. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

91. **TREWIN, Douglas Frederick.** V.57668. A/AB. W-2. Born in Point de Bute, N.B., August 6, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Early in 1945 was drafted to HMCS Ontario (aboard which cruiser he ran into several former "W" members) and about a year afterwards received his discharge. Forty-one years later (viz. 1987) he retired from the Nova Scotia Power Corporation having attained the position of District Supervisor. Married with a family of five and now a widower, he lives in Parrsboro, N.S., where in 1992 he was installed as President of Branch 45 of the Royal Canadian Legion in which he has been a member since 1950.

92. **VAILLANCOURT, Jacques.** O-74790. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Spent six months in fairmiles and MTBs prior to joining "W" at the end of May, 1944. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944. Held appointments in corvettes HMCS Trillium and Humberstone prior to demobilization on October 11, 1945. In mid-1946 reenlisted in RCN and, having become a communications specialist and earned his "half-stripe" as a Lt.Cdr. six years later, he resigned from the Navy on April 16, 1952. Subsequently spent many years with Alcan. Maried with two daughters, he and his wife live in Ottawa.

93. **VILNEFF, George.** V.53046. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Cochrane and Cobalt, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

94. **WALKER, James Gray.** O-75580. A/Lt. Being a S/Lt. on "RN loan" at the time, on November 7, 1943 he became Liaison officer for the "W" Commando ratings at HMS Armadillo. With the arrival in December of "W"'s full complement of officers, he transferrred to the Second Canadian LCI(L) Flotilla. Following a serious illness two months later, he returned to Canada in June and was subsequently sent to the Lady Eaton Convalescent Home in Toronto.

95. **WARREN, Denis A.** V.39693. A/LS. W-1. Home town -- Chatham, N.B.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

96. **WATKINS, Ivor Eugene ("Junior").** V.44071. AB. W-1. Born in Montreal, May 23, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Retired in 1984 after thirty-nine years with Canadian Pacific Railways in signals and communications. Joined the Black Watch (R.H.C.) militia as a corporal in 1945 (D.598100) and twenty years later became Regimental

97.



99.



101.



Sergeant Major (nowadays called W.O.1). Commissioned as Lieutenant in 1968, he subsequently qualified as Captain and then Major, retiring with the former rank and transferring to the Supplementary Militia Reserve in 1973. Stepped down in 1992 after an eight-year term as President of the Black Watch Association. For many years has been president in charge of the Black Watch Museum in downtown Montreal. An accomplished wood carver, painter, and designer. Married Margaret Ruth Winterbottom of Montreal on June 5, 1948; they live in Pointe Claire, P.Q..

97. **WATT, Arthur Frederick ("Art").** V.56914. AB. W-2. Born in Craik, Sask., September 14, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Married at HMCS Cornwallis on December 27, 1944, his wife Opal was in the WRCNS. They have four sons and one daughter, sixteen grandchildren (as of 1992) ranging in age from 4 to 23, and they live in Craik. An extract from his Jan. 13, 1992 letter to the author states; "Actively operated grain farm since 1946. Cattle & hog operation, 1946-1972. Commercial aerial crop dusting, 1960-1980. Hold a current pilot license. Debt mediation for Federal Dep't of Agriculture, 1984-present."

98. **WESTERMAN, L.** V.58750. OD. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

99. **WHITE, Joseph B.** A.5019. AB. W-2. Home town -- Port Saunders, Newfoundland. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

100. **WINN, George.** V.8098. PO. W-1. Replaced by N. Knight, AB in June 1944.

101. **WOODALL, Earl Gerald ("Duke").** V.19246. AB. W-2. Born in Windsor, Ont., May 24, 1921. Pre-war private (A.450114) with Essex Scottish (RCIC). Transferred to RCNVR as able-seaman in 1941 and, after several weeks on North Atlantic convoy duty in HMCS Assiniboine and HMCS Medicine Hat respectively, was sent to Scotland at the beginning of 1942 for Combined Operations landing craft training. Following extensive service in connection with the Allied landings in North Africa and Italy, he joined "W' in June 1944 as a replacement for W.A. Burden, AB and served in Normandy form July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following foreign service leave, he spent eight months aboard HMCS Trail on the North Atlantic convoy routes before being discharge in October 1945. Reenlisted in Essex Scottish militia, 1946-51. Worked for many years in Windsor's main postoffice, retiring in 1986. Married Mildred Rebecca Chisholm (1922-74) on October 21, 1944; they had a son and a daughter and two grandchildren. For the last few years "Duke"

has been residing in Golden Gate Lodge, a Windsor rest home, where son Tom and his wife Bonnie visit him regularly.

102. **WRIGHT, W.** V.67555. AB. W-1. Came from Ontario. Replaced R. Crough, AB in mid-July 1944. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

103. **YULE, George.** LS. Came from Vancouver. Prior to joining "W" in October 1943, had served in corvettes on North Atlantic convoy duty.

103.



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RCN Beach Commando "W"

Part II Off-the-record anecdotal "portholes".

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APPENDICES

PORTHOLE #1





Graduation Day -- HMCS Kings -- May 22, 1942

PORTHOLE #1 **Three of a Kind**

How vividly do I remember Saturday, May 22, 1942 -- graduation-day for "U" Division's thirty Probationary sub-lieutenants at HMCS Kings in Halifax. With the traditional discarding of their white cap-covers in celebration of successfully completing the sixteen-week training course, these youthful naval officers, after bidding farewell to their shipmates, set course to take up their respective first appointments.

Finding myself at loose ends on graduation-day morning and realizing that my sea-appointment might well diminish future shopping opportunities, I ventured downtown to buy a few personal toilet articles and returned before lunch to our four-man cabin dormitory. Here my lower bunk-mate, Donald Dodds, seemed both surprised and amused to see a Remington electric razor among my purchases, because from the beginning of our course in January I had received continuous ridicule for only having to shave "once in a while".

During the afternoon graduation ceremony, with Commander A.M. Hope RCN, (C.O., HMCS Kings) at the helm and aided by Captain C.R.H. Taylor, RCN (N.O.I.C., Halifax) and The Hon. A.L. Macdonald (Minister of National Defence for Naval Services), Jim Mainguy was honoured for attaining the highest all-round standing in our Division. A completely unexpected event then occurred when I was awarded the "most officer-like qualities" prize which, much to the amusement of my shipmates, turned out to be a Sunbeam electric razor!!



Look Sharp! Be Sharp! Feel Sharp!

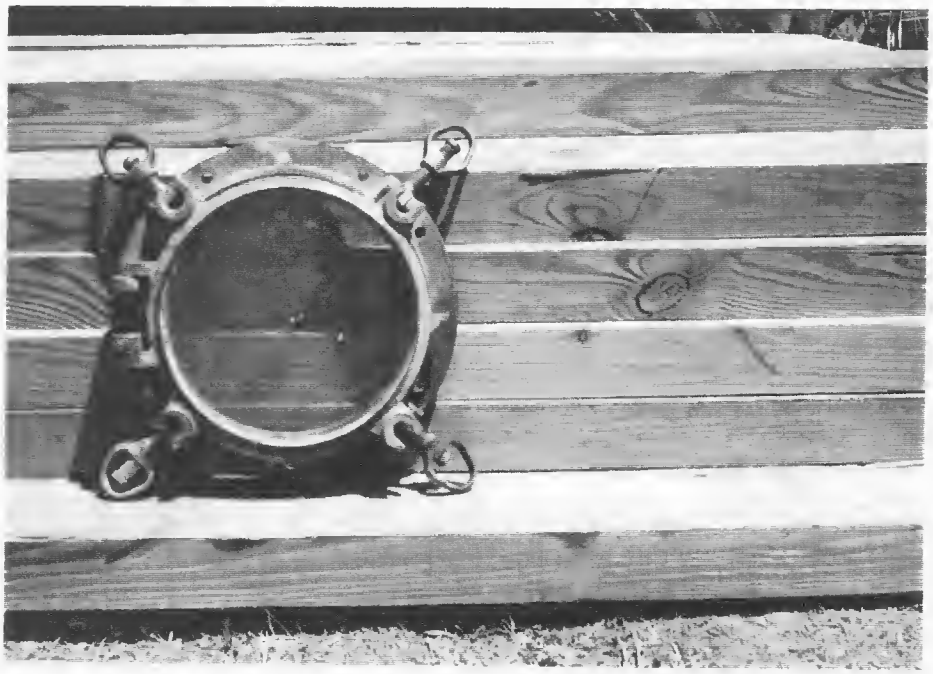
Use Gillette Blue Blades

With the Sharpest Edges Ever Honed

A few hours later, as I was finishing packing, the mail-office called to say a parcel had just arrived for me. From my RCAF brother Hartland, then a pilot instructor at Summerside, I became the recipient of --- a Schick electric razor!!!

(This razor affair always reminds me of the American comedian Bob Hope's story about visiting a military hospital. He stopped at the bedside of a patient whose face, except for two tiny eye-holes and a mouth-slit, was completely covered with bandages. "Gosh", the comedian asked, "how do you manage to shave?". "Why, Bob", came the reply, "I've had my close shave".)

PORTHOLE #2



PORTHOLE #2 **Planting the Seed**

Marking my first appointment to a sea-going ship in World War II, May 24, 1942 proved to be a critical date in my naval career. By shedding our white cap-covers on the previous day, I and thirty other Probationary Sub-Lieutenants had graduated as members of "U" Division from the four-month RCNVR officer training course at HMCS Kings in Halifax.

Now it was off to Pictou to joint a Bangor-Class minesweeper, HMCS Swift Current which, because only one of her two boilers ever seemed to function at any given time, the crew had renamed Slow Dribble. With RN submarine P-512 acting as "enemy" and working in tandem with the corvette HMCS Kamloops, our mission entailed training *asdic ratings to operate the submarine-detection equipment.

Towards the end of my first week, the Captain (Lt. (n) Ian H. Bell, RCNVR) informed me that I would thereafter be responsible for Signals and Asdic, as well as the ship's canteen, duties previously carried out by S/Lt. Harry Trenholme. The latter, who had volunteered for Combined Operations overseas, left Slow Dribble soon afterwards and subsequently saw action with landing craft in the 1943 North African and 1944 Normandy campaigns.

After discussing the subject at length with Harry prior to his departure, I decided then and there that if one day the opportunity presented itself to serve overseas in Combined Operations, I too would volunteer.

*Asdic is an acronym for Anti-Submarine Defence Investigation Committee. (The Encyclopedia Americana (1952), Canadian Edition, vol.28, p.723)



HMCS "Slow Dribble", J-254, 1942



The Sower



Combined Operations
Badge

(see next page)

COMBINED OPERATIONS BADGE

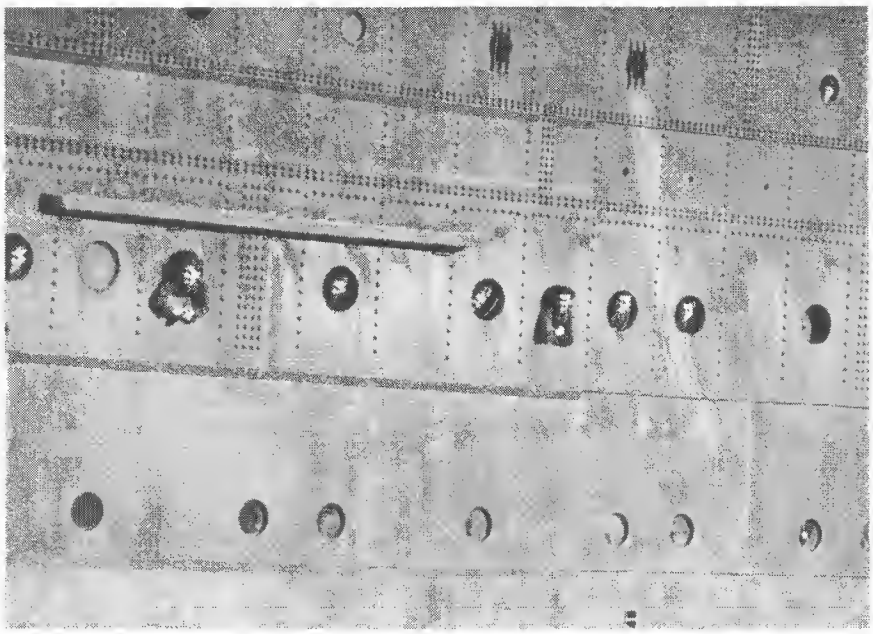
On January 13, 1942 Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of the Combined Operations Command, issued a general invitation for a badge design. Some five weeks later he selected that which appears on the preceding page, being a variation of one of several submitted by Lt. D.A. Grant, RNVR, of HMS Tormentor, Combined Operation Command's principal landing craft training base near Southampton.

The badge, as described by Mountbatten, consisted of a 'Tommy' gun, an eagle and a stockless anchor, repesenting the Army, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. On July 4 authority was granted for its issue and before the end of the month the first order of badges for the Royal Navy was placed. with general distribution proceeding in August. Although on September 2 the Americans requested a supply of the official badge, some of their combined operations units chose to wear either variations or different badges altogether.

On June 17, 1946 C.O.H.Q. declared that "the use of the Combined Operations badge is to be discontinued with effect from 1 July 1946". In 1948 the badge was reintroduced with effect from 1 June.

N.B. The foregoing statement is taken from Terry Carney's article "THE COMBINED OPERATIONS BADGE, 1942-1946", which appeared in The Formation Sign, The Journal of the Military Heraldry Society, No 168 Oct-Dec 1992

PORTHOLE #3





HMT Mauretania (1939-65) in cruising colours

PORTHOLE #3 **Medic Mo**

After enjoying embarkation leave from November 1-22, 1943 at home in Montreal, which followed my appointment as one of the three officers in charge of "KK" Division's ninety-odd Probationary sub-lieutenants who had just recently graduated from HMCS Kings, I returned to an East Coast Canadian port and boarded HM troopship Mauretania for passage to UK and service with Canadian Combined Operations forces. Thus was I carrying out the decision made eighteen months earlier upon relieving S/Lt. Trenholme in HMCS Swift Current.

HMT Mauretania, built originally as a Cunard ocean-liner in Birkenhead, England between 1937 and 1939, was subsequently converted into a troop transport in Sydney, Australia. Designed with about a thousand berths, during World War II she frequently accommodated several thousand "passengers" at a time. But as I mounted her gangway on that raw November 25th Thursday morning, my thoughts were doubtlessly not on accommodation. Adrenalin, however, was flowing like a tidal wave. At the ship's entrance port, I handed my boarding-pass to a military official and kept moving slowly inboard, expecting to be advised in short order of the location of my "state room". After what seemed ages, he announced simply: "Lt. Finley, your name does not seem to be on the passenger list. We'll check it again presently." At this point I stepped aside to permit an endless stream of embarkees behind me to check in and receive their accommodation allocation. When recheck revealed that my name was indeed not listed, but after the naval authorities had at least validated my boarding-pass, I set out on a recce of the ship to find an available place to stow my gear and lay my head. Finally,



(on right)
RCAMC Capt. C. Miller Ballem,
alias "Medic Mo",
in Antwerp, September 1944

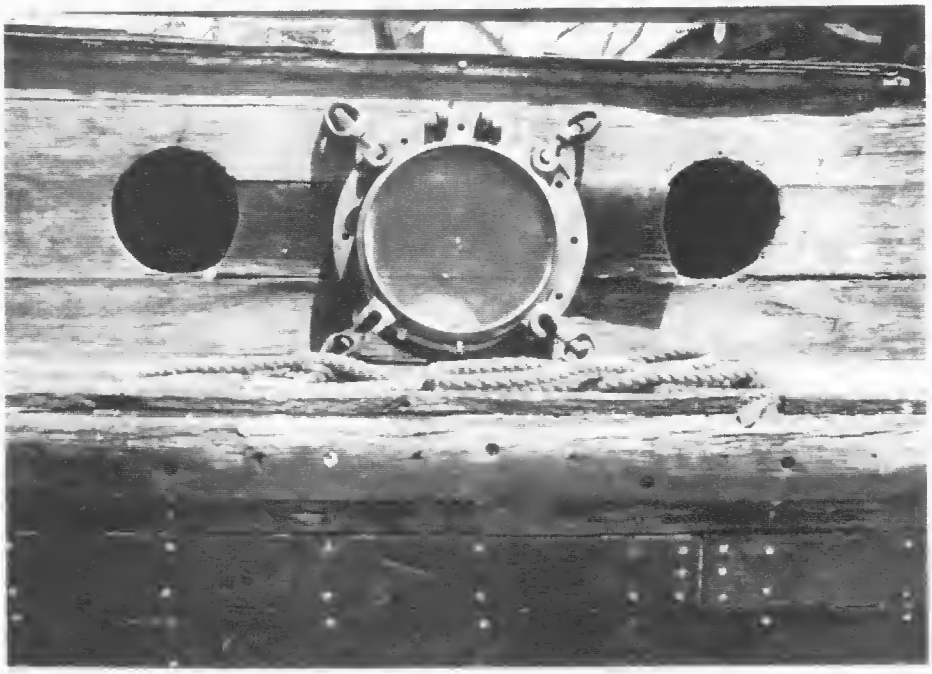
in what can only be described as steerage quarters, I happened upon a four-bunk "state-room" occupied by three RCAMC captains. Upon learning that the fourth bunk was originally assigned to another medic, who yesterday had received revised draft orders, I immediately started trying to convince my potential cabin-mates of the desirability of having a matelot close at hand during the forthcoming trans-Atlantic voyage. So it was, without having to invoke my Senior Service prerogative, that I managed to find suitable "digs".

Whereas the week-long crossing itself proved uneventful as far as encountering the enemy was concerned, a number of not insignificant happenings occurred in relation to our foursome and particularly between two of us -- me and Dr. C. Miller Ballem, nicknamed Mo. To begin with the weather turned nasty as soon as we passed out between the gate-vessels at the entrance to Halifax harbour, and seasickness took possession of Mo and his two chums. Over the ensuing three days and nine meals, the medical trio relied upon me to bring them nourishment which, I must admit, was never accompanied by much sympathy! All the time I wondered why the various anti-mal-de-mer medicines consumed by each of them provided so little relief -- probably because they were taken too late or simply because virtually nothing they swallowed stayed down!

By the fourth day the weather improved and, having acquired our sea legs, the four of us enjoyed a game of quoits on the promenade deck and a full-course meal in the dining saloon. We all agreed that, yes, it was good to be alive again! But alas, one speaketh too soon, for my joy was to be short-lived. Within twelve hours of these two

joyful diversions, I landed up in sick-bay with a "strep" throat and sky-high temperature. Apart from showing casual concern about my over-all physical condition, the three doctors (led by Mo) lost little time in paying me back for the ridicule and insults which I had heaped upon them earlier in the voyage. Two days later, when we docked in Liverpool, I was still confined to sick-bay and my three cabin-mates began spreading rumours around that I would be shipped back to Canada. However, after they and all the "passengers" had disembarked, I inveigled the Sick-Bay Attendant into collecting my belongings from our steerage cabin; and later, under cover of darkness, I managed to navigate the gangway and skip ashore on that bitterly cold evening. How Medic Mo and his two companions would have laughed to see me on board the night-train from Liverpool to London, curled up snake-like on a four-foot square luggage rack, with a greatcoat for a blanket and a naval cap for a pillow.

PORTHOLE #4



PORTHOLE #4 **Switching Appointments**

As already mentioned in PORTHOLE #1, the idea of serving with Combined Operations first occurred to me during the summer of 1942 when, as a freshly graduated sub-lieutenant, I took up my first sea-going assignment in HMCS Swift Current. Then in September I headed inland for the Hunter Boat Works at Orillia to await completion of HMCM/L Q-092, a fairmile. Just before freeze-up we arrived in Halifax to undertake "loop patrol" duties outside the harbour gate-vessels. By mid-winter I had transferred to the corvette HMCS Shawinigan which was engaged at the time as a convoy escort on the Halifax/St. John's/New York "triangle" run. Six months afterwards HMCS Stadacona's Manning officer told me to report to HMCS Kings as one of three officers for "KK" Division, a ninety-member class of Probationary Sub-Lieutenants. The day was now rapidly approaching when I would volunteer to serve overseas with Combined Operations, being a decision made well over a year ago.

While Bill Benson, John Bird, and I were escorting the three respective sections of "KK" Division through their sixteen-week officer-training course from mid-July to November 1943, the Canadian Government was making commitments which would soon affect my future career. On September 8, as a result of the "Quadrant" conference of Allied leaders held the previous month in Quebec City, Canada's Cabinet War Committee approved the two following British Admiralty proposals:

1. RCN to form a Canadian squadron of three landing craft flotillas (approximately 350 men).
2. RCN to form a Canadian Beach Commando and a Canadian Beach Signals Unit (approximately 1,000 men).

In both cases training would take place in Britain and be completed by the Spring of 1944.

Early the next month, with "KK" Division graduation-day only three weeks away, I called on the Manning Officer and volunteered my services with respect to these proposals. Then, having passed a rather stiff medical examination shortly afterwards, I found my name under the Combined Operations (U.K.) section of the October 21 Daily List of Appointments (#218/43). Four days later but unbeknown to me at the time, a memorandum from the Naval Board at Ottawa to RCN Headquarters in London indicated I would constitute one of twelve required First Lieutenants for the 1st Canadian LCI(L) flotilla.

After fulfilling my responsibilities in connection with "KK" Division's graduation, I proceeded home early in November to Montreal on embarkation leave and to await notification of departure date and time.

On Thursday morning, November 25, 1943, sixteen RCNVR officers boarded HMT Mauretania in Halifax for passage to UK and Combined Operations, with ten appointed to the Canadian Beach Commando and the remaining six to the Canadian landing craft flotillas. But even as our trooper was soon speeding along at around twenty knots for its scheduled December 1 Liverpool arrival, the Personnel staff at Canada's naval headquarters in London were apparently switching two of the above-noted appointments. In a "memo-to-file", dated November 29, the Staff Officer (Combined Operations) pencilled out the name of O.H. Rumpel on the list of "Beach Party Officers" and substituted that of E.G. Finley. Likewise, on the list of "Officers for Canadian

This comprises the full 2-page, 29th November, 1943 MEMORANDUM initialled by "WSB" (Lt. W.S. Brooke), Staff Officer in charge of Combined Operations under SCNO(L)

Reference:

PAC, RG-24, Vol. 11,720, file 33-17-1, v.1

29th November, 1943.

M E M O R A N D U M

OFFICERS FOR CANADIAN COMBINED OPERATIONS

Beach Party Officers as follows:-

Lieut. Cdr. Wm. M. MacDonald
Lieutenant J. Bentley
" L.C. Campbell
" R.J. Johnstone
" A.D. Rayburn
" C. Hatch
Sub-Lieut. ~~O.H. Rumpel~~ E.G. Finley
" K.G. Crowhurst
" R.I. Shales
" F. Angus
" G.V.G. Baum

are to report to H.M.S. "Armadillo" Sunday 5th December. They will proceed to "Armadillo", which is a remote base on the shores of Loch Long, from either Greenock or Gourock and arrangements are being made through "Armadillo" and perhaps "Niobe" to handle the party. Between arrival in the U.K. and reporting to "Armadillo", Beach Party Officers are to proceed to London, report to Staff Officer (~~Personnel~~), King's House, 10 Haymarket, and complete necessary records required by him. While in London it is hoped to give them some background of Canadian Combined Operations but this will only take part of their time, the rest of their time will be available for sight-seeing, etc. Officers will have to take their gear with them to London and back again to Scotland, they should leave their heavy gear at the railway station in London. On their trip north they will arrive presumably at St. Enoch's Station, Glasgow and will have to move their luggage to Central Station, Glasgow, to get a Gourock train, here again all gear should be taken with them right through.

86 P Sans Frais

Officers for Canadian L.C.I.(L)'s consisting of:-

Lieutenant N.W. Gooderham
Sub-Lieut. ✓ J.F. Lynn
" ✓ D.A. Moon
" J.A. McCarthy
" ~~E.G. Finley~~ O.H. Rumpel
" ✓ J.A. Patterson
" ✓ W.G. Pringle
" ✓ R.J.G. Ritchie
" ✓ L.E. Simpson
" ✓ A.G. Carlisle

are to proceed forthwith to Troon, Ayrshire, by way of Kilmarnock. At Troon they are to report to Lieut. H. Doheny, RCNVR, c/o Captain H.L.C. and if overnight accommodation is required will probably be accommodated in "Landale House". These Officers, or nine of them, as 1st Lieutenants will be put in charge of their crews and will have to take the crews to join their ships. They leave Troon Friday, 3rd December, and are due to join their ships Saturday, 4th December, and commission on that day, thereafter they will remain with their ships in the normal way. Information as to location of ships and Commanding Officers will be furnished at Troon. Officers are reminded that they should take all their gear with them as it is almost impossible to count on gear following along safely. It would appear that the train to Kilmarnock leaves Liverpool Lime Street Station about 2245 and arrives Kilmarnock about 0600 next morning, from there, though the same station, take another train to Troon about 20 minutes or so later. If they wish Officers may heave their heavy luggage at the Troon railway station.

WSB

LCI(L)s", O.H. Rumpel's name is substituted for E.G Finley's. Regarding these switches, for which no additional official documentation has been found, I personally cannot recall whether my original appointment was to landing craft or to beach commandos. The only other clue appears in the following sentence of my December 10 letter to Mother: "I switched appointments at the last second (five mins. to be exact) & so headed for London."

A similar instance of appointment switching happened after we arrived in England to two of the other RCNVR officers who had boarded the Mauretania on that November morning. By mid-December G.V.C. Baum, who was originally assigned to the Beach Commando on October 21, had replaced J.K. Macbeth in landing craft and eventually became Signal Officer for the 3rd Canadian LCI(L) flotilla. Macbeth, meanwhile, after completing a long "n" (viz navigation) course the previous summer, had been appointed in October as Assistant Squadron Officer for the three LCI(L) flotillas. To grant his December request for transfer to beach commandos, the appropriate RCN personnel authorities apparently simply switched his and Baum's October appointments.

While no official documentation has thus far been found which shows conclusively why or by whom either the Rumpel/Finley or Baum/Macbeth appointment switches were effected, it is only due to the Rumpel/Finley switch that any of these PORTHOLES came to be written at all, because Rumpel*, after surviving the Normandy landings as First Lieutenant in LCI(L) #166, subsequently lost his life on March 18, 1945 when his ship, HMCS Guysborough, was sunk by U-868 in the Bay of Biscay.

*Although able to recall quite clearly spending a couple of pre-war summers with Oscar Rumpel at an Ontario boy's camp on Canoe Lake in Ontario, I do not think that our paths ever again crossed.

PORTHOLE #5



PORTHOLE #5 **Rocking the Boat**

a) Benghazi Bill's Bitch

By December 6, 1943, a dozen RCNVR officers and some seventy Canadian naval ratings had assembled in HMS Armadillo (a Royal Navy Combined Operations base at Ardentinny on Loch Long) to undergo several weeks of specialized training as RCN Beach Commando "W". In a February 5, 1990 letter to the author, "W"'s Deputy Principal Beachmaster and Commanding Officer, R.J. Johnstone, describes the officers' arrival thusly:

> *I can recall vividly our reception as we disembarked from a lighter to the strains of "O Canada", sweetly played by a Marine band, and the gracious participation of Armadillo's C.O. in the welcoming ceremony.*

Cdr. E. A. Davis, RN (Commanding Officer of the base at the time and known to his staff as "Uncle Eric") soon became nicknamed "Benghazi Bill" when we learned that he had served around Tripoli on warships which participated in Operation "TORCH"'s North African landings. According to Lt. Cdr. D. MacArthur, RNVR, HMS Armadillo's 1943-45 Training Officer, not only did Davis know nothing about beach commandos upon his appointment as C.O. in December 1942, but he held out for several months before deciding to shed his pusser blue uniform and wear khaki battle-dress -- the Combined Operations "rig of the day".

(The following anecdote is taken from W-1 Beachmaster Lt. Sutherland's 12 December 1990 letter to the author.)

> *The Captain was a great dog fancier and particularly proud of his purebred Springer Spaniel bitch. He was occasionally to be seen walking this dog which he guarded and cosetted [sic] with all the concern of a professional kennel man. "W" Commando was sent on a long hike over the shoulder of Creachan Mor the big mountain behind ARMADILLO to Carrick Castle on Loch Goil. In the course of this bivouac "W" Commando adopted a mongrel cur, or perhaps the stray dog adopted the Canadians, who is to say? In any event they brought the mongrel back to ARMADILLO with them with the intention of mating it with the Captain's Springer Spaniel at that moment conveniently in heat. Somehow this mischievous stud activity was arranged, but unfortunately not without it coming to the attention of Commander Davis whose reaction was understandably one of fury and outrage. Of course there was hell to pay which consisted of "W" Commando being confined to barracks for a week, a punishment which because of the extreme isolation of HMS ARMADILLO was really no punishment at all. The only good thing to be said about this occurrence is that mercifully the mongrel failed to impregnate the Springer Spaniel bitch. It should be added that this action was the beginning of "W" commando's unfortunate reputation for mischief and deviltry.*

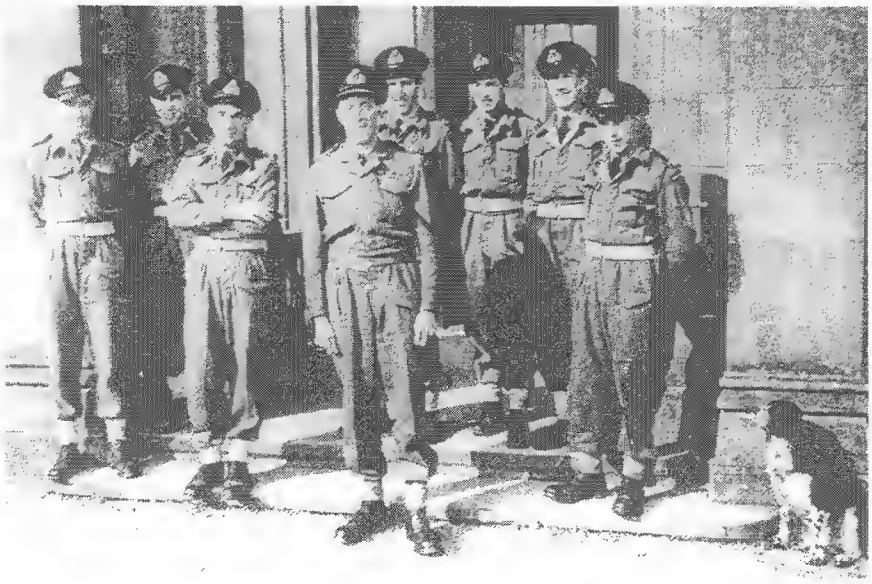
A variation on this theme is given by "W" Commando's C.O., Lt. Cdr. Johnstone, who writes as follows in his Feb. 5, 1990 letter to the author:

> *I can clearly recall, too, the wardroom skit performed by yourself and MacBeth honoring the "betrothal" of a shy spaniel bitch. The sedately comic epithalamium even brought a smile to the normally staid features of Benghazi Bill, proud owner of the pooch.*

"Nelson", W's Mongrel Mutt,

takes Centre Stage during Route-March Rest





"Benghazi Bill" (front centre),

his Training Staff and Springer Spaniel "Sheila"

PORTHOLE #5 **Rocking the Boat**

b) Bangalore Bentley's Bomb

Soon after his return to Ardentinny from an "Explosives & Demolitions" course in HMS Volcano, Lt. Bentley, "W" Commando's Administrative and Stores Officer, became the terror of one and all. His fellow officers dared not even pick up a boot for fear it had been booby-trapped by their usually sedate colleague whom they forthwith nicknamed "Bangalore" Bentley.

As long as these pranks affected or involved only officers undergoing training at the time, they were taken in good spirit and simply accepted as a matter of course. But as W-1 Beachmaster Lt. Sutherland recalls in his 12 December 1990 letter to the author, a different view and consequence resulted when one particular antic affected Benghazi Bill, HMS Armadillo's Commanding Officer:

> *Now the Captain's quarters at ARMADILLO were immediately above the Wardroom. In both the Wardroom and the Captain's cabin the fireplaces were kept going for warmth and cheer throughout the cold, dark winter evenings of 1943-4. One evening when the Anteroom was filled with officers enjoying the conviviality of a pre-prandial drink "Bangalore" Bentley contrived to slip a "thunder-flash" into the Wardroom fireplace. There was a very loud report followed by a cloud of smoke and a noisy uproar. Unknown to Bentley the Wardroom and the Captain's cabin shared a chimney flue. Not only did the Captain's cabin share the loud report, but worse still, it was enveloped in an impenetrable black cloud of greasy smoke and soot, the accumulation of many months of log fires. As some of the officers of "U" and "V" Commandos were also present in the ARMADILLO anteroom on this occasion responsibility for this smoke bomb attack on the Captain could not be pinned exclusively on "W" Commando. So bar privileges for all officers were cut off for forty-eight hours. These two episodes in HMS ARMADILLO [the first is described in PORTHOLE #5a)] initiated the unfortunate reputation acquired by "W" Commando as a bunch of Canadian hooligans, yahoos and bad hats.*

"Bangalore" Bentley's worst fear



Mr. Lees, a nearby resident and ex-RN officer, took these snapshots of the fire which gutted Glenfinart House in the 1960s.





PORTHOLE #6



PORTHOLE #6 **Calling our Bluff**

Surely one of the most tragic results of each and every war throughout the course of human history has to be the number of youth who become casualties -- either killed or disabled. Several million would be a rough but not unreasonable estimate of deaths alone to the under twenty-five year-olds serving in the armed forces of countries which participated in World Wars I and II. Whether as volunteers or conscripts, youth down through the ages in general have considered loyalty to country or cause as high priority or moral responsibility even if it entailed paying the supreme sacrifice. Whatever their motive for joining the armed forces, however, youth also invariably demonstrate a certain degree of impatience when they undergo what seems as repetitive training and endless waiting before actually "going into action".

After some ten weeks' initial training at HMS Armadillo in Scotland, RCN Beach Commando "W" moved to HMS Mastodon at Exbury in mid-February 1944. Even while in Scotland signs of discontent had shown up among both officers and ratings for a variety of reasons -- e.g. dismissal of the original PBM, terrible winter weather, minor flue epidemic, desolateness of location, and seemingly general disorganization. Letters home and diary entries on the eve of our departure for southern England mention "the troops and us getting restless" and "almost all officers downhearted and pretty fed up."

Ten days after taking up residence at Inchmery House in the New Forest on February 17, I wrote these words in a letter home:

> *To-day for the 1st time there was ill-feeling among our officers, and together with what we were told at an inspection this a.m., it looks as tho' our unit might split up. It's difficult to make this all add up, but I can't help feeling that we've waisted [sic] an awful lot of time, experience, training, & men, if they don't use us now.*

The letter went on to indicate that in view of a possible split-up Jack Macbeth (ABM in W-3) and I planned to visit the Canadian Navy's Personnel Officer in London within a fortnight.

Throughout the month of March, even as we were busily and not unhappily preoccupied in taking various short-term specialized courses, Macbeth and I actively considered transferring out of Combined Operations and back into General Service -- MTBs and midget submarines being two of the choices contemplated. But since no such openings were forthcoming by our self-imposed March 31 deadline, it was decided to enter the lion's den.

Accordingly on Sunday, April 2, following Morning Divisions and still wearing Number 5's we set off on bicycles from Exbury to visit Rear-Admiral C.B. Barry, DSO, RN, at his home ten miles away in Beaulieu. At the time he was Flag Officer, Submarines at the Admiralty and was reportedly on weekend leave. Upon arriving an hour or so later at the picket-fence gate in front of his cottage, Jack spotted a man in work clothes kneeling beside the flower beds and managed to attract his attention. "Excuse me, Mate," Jack began, "But would you happen to know if the Admiral's aboard?"

Macbeth & Finley
setting sail





Admiral Barry, RN
goes down the hatch
into an X-Craft
Midget
Submarine



After what seemed several minutes, a reply finally broke the silence: "Not sure, but I'll go and enquire for you -- and whom will I say is calling?" We answered in concert: "A couple of Canadian naval officers." Thereupon the man slowly stood up and headed off towards the rear of the house.

Again an eternity passed but eventually the front door of the cottage opened and who should appear, or reappear, but our supposed gardener, only this time attired as a rear-admiral!! Jack and I immediately donned caps, sprang smartly to attention, and executed the most "pusser" salutes of our respective three-year-young naval careers. Fortunately for us formality was only short-lived. Even before introductions began, Admiral Barry had removed both his "brass" hat and jacket, and in short order the three of us were comfortably seated in his living-room enjoying a cup of tea served graciously by Mrs. Barry.

When called upon Jack and I indicated that the purpose of our visit was to enquire from our host about the possibility of and procedure for transferring from the Canadian beach commandos to RN submarines. After describing briefly a submariner's life, noting our names, telling us how to go about making official application, and without committing himself in any way, the rear-admiral saw us to the door and wished us bon voyage. Stopping off for lunch at a pub en route back to Exbury, we congratulated each other for what had been an encouraging first step in leaving beach commandos.

Scarcely had we stowed our bicycles in the storeroom of Inchmery House around mid-afternoon than Ken Crowhurst, my "W-2" assistant beachmaster colleague, came running up to us: "Hey, you guys," he began, "where've ya been? There's plenty o'gossip goin' 'round that yer both in for it." We confided in him where we'd been and what had transpired, and then headed off to our quarters to relax in a hot bath.

Later in the wardroom and during tiffin Jack and I realized that something indeed was up, because several other junior "W" officers showed an unusual degree of curiosity about our morning activities. As we were leaving the dining-room together, the quartermaster intercepted us and said that our PBM wanted to see us in his cabin at 1900 hours.

He was quite obviously in a bad mood when we showed up at the appointed hour and wasted little time in coming to the point. Just before lunch he had been summoned before Capt. Swinley, C.O. of HMS Mastodon, and informed about our meeting with Rear-Admiral Barry. Such conduct, he declared, was contrary to King's Rules and Admiralty Instructions (K.R. & A.I.) and could lead to immediate and dishonourable discharge. Jack and I remained speechless -- for my part, it suddenly dawned on me that while only two days earlier we had decided to enter the lion's den, now we were about to be eaten alive! When neither of us responded to his offer to speak in our own defence, the PBM ordered us to follow him to the C.O.'s cabin.



PBM O'Hagan



C.O. HMS Mastodon

Capt. Swinley, RN

with his great dane

Then after the charges against us had been re-read, Captain Swinley, RN, reiterated the seriousness of such misconduct and regretted that it would permanently tarnish our respective naval records which, he was advised, had been quite praiseworthy up to that point. As previously, Jack and I remained silent when asked if we had anything to say. Having conferred briefly with the C.O. and while we "prisoners" continued to stand at attention, the PBM read the following prepared statement:

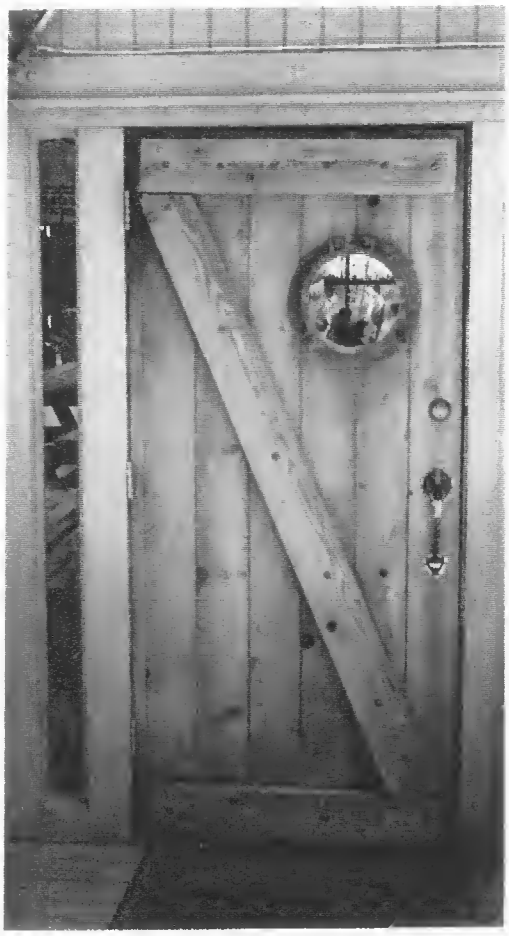
> *Whereas in the presence this day of Rear-Admiral Barry, RN, Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth, RCNVR, and Lt. E.G. Finley, RCNVR, has each so volunteered, they shall, as soon as possible, be reappointed from RCN Beach Commando "W" to serve with the Royal Navy in midget submarines.*

"Any questions? Lt. Macbeth? Lt. Finley?" A deadly silence prevailed. "Cases dismissed." We donned caps, saluted, about-faced, and duly departed.

Repairing to the wardroom, Jack and I remained speechless for quite some time. Then, as our pent-up tension gradually eased, we began to realize just what was happening. Youthful exuberance had propelled us to enter the lion's den and volunteer as submariners. Overlooking our misbehaviour but determined to teach us a lesson, the three senior naval officers had collectively decided to give us a good scare. So our punishment was a next-to-certain death sentence - MIDGET SUBMARINES. They had indeed called our bluff!!

(We never did transfer to midget or any submarines. Between April 5-9 we submitted formal applications to Rear-Admiral Barry. On April 15 we had interviews with Admiral Nelles and Lt. Cdr. Brooke SO(CO) in London, and were subsequently informed that any such transfer was refused until after the invasion of Normandy.)

PORTHOLE #7



PORTHOLE #7 **Reg's First Milk Run**

Throughout its ten-month life, "W" Commando was seldom without a mascot, invariably of canine form. In HMS Armadillo, our first training base, it was "Nelson", a stray mongrel which joined us during an overnight exercise into the hills around Loch Long. His attachment to our unit almost terminated as a result of the excessive interest he displayed towards the C.O.'s purebred spaniel bitch (see PORTHOLE #5a.). On the eve of leaving Scotland and moving to the south coast, however, we reluctantly accepted a local widow's offer to take "Nelson" in. We felt that he would be better off to remain in his Argyll surroundings and have a more permanent home.

At the end of May 1944 "W" Beach Commando arrived mascotless at their base in HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) near Cowes on the Isle of Wight. The boys immediately began to look around for a replacement for "Nelson". Before many days passed, ABs Reg Burse and "Smitty" Smith returned to the camp late one evening with a pair of the cutest puppies imaginable. Once formally adopted, the twin mascots now had to be properly nourished, something which caused extra concern since they were scarcely weaned. So while able with difficulty to handle the scraps of solid food from our messhall, they quite obviously yearned to suckle their mother.

On the afternoon of their first day-off, Reg, "Smitty", and two other ratings set off with a pail towards a nearby farm in quest of some milk which of course at the time constituted a strictly controlled and rationed food product. Approaching from a wooded area not visible from the farm-house and finding the "coast clear", they made plans for both the attack and the withdrawal. As the only member of the foursome with the

HMS VECTIS (PINES CAMP)
Cowes, Isle of Wight
Summer 1944



Front Row: Reg Burse (left) and
H.D. Smith (centre) cuddling puppies

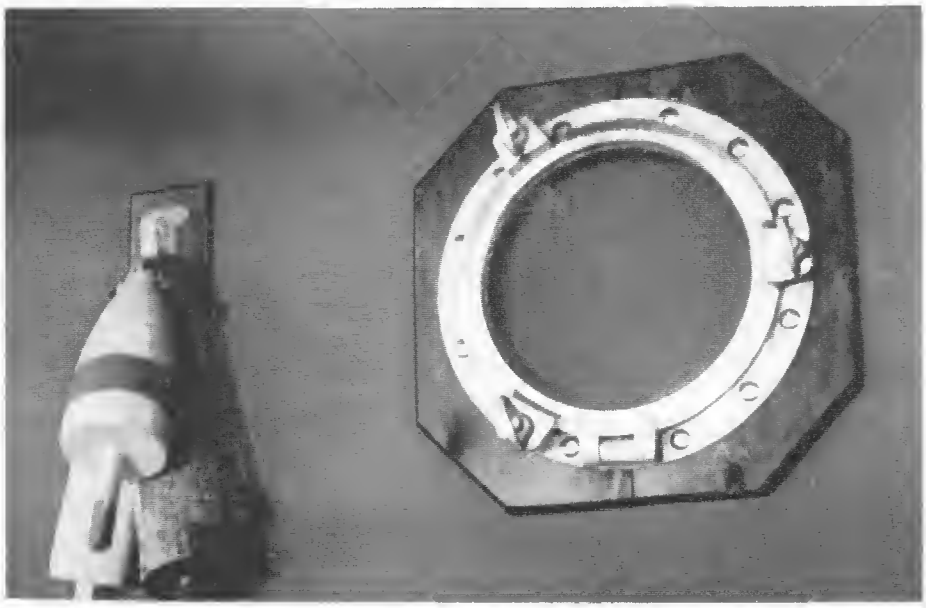
necessary experience, Reg would do the actual milking, with "Smitty" providing him support, and the other two standing guard.

Having singled out and befriended a well-laden cow, Reg proceeded to fill up the pail. It was barely half full when a loud cry rang out from the woods: "The farmer's coming -- let's exit pronto!!" The rest of the episode is described in Reg's Sept. 22, 1992 letter to the author:

> *...the farmer caught us milking the cow & chased us. As we were running, we had to jump across a wide ditch. I didn't quite make the other side, but landed up to my knees in black muck -- but still holding the can of milk without spilling a drop -- a great commando feat! The next day at base the commander had us all on the parade square, & gave us a very stern lecture on hindering the war effort, by stealing the farmer's milk -- the farmer had complained to him about our trespassing. We all stood there trying to keep a straight face, but as kids at heart, we were hard pressed to keep from snickering out loud.*

Which experience, who's to know, may have helped Reg obtain his second postwar job on civvy street. After discharge and marriage in December 1945, he worked for a few months on a bread-delivery route in Burlington and then, as skipper of a horse-drawn wagon, took over a local milk run.

PORTHOLE #8



PORTHOLE #8 **Medic Mo Revisited**

Sunday July 23 1944 may very well reckon as the most critical day in my life. Having been picked off in JUNO sector of the Normandy beaches by a "Moaning Minnie" fired from the direction of Caen, the jeep I was driving swerved off the road, plunged into a ditch, and came to an abrupt stop. Fragments from the exploding shell had penetrated my skull and blown off my steel helmet. Seconds later I must have blacked out.

The next thing I recall -- approximately an hour later, according to official medical records -- was hearing and recognizing a familiar voice say: "Hello Skip. Do you remember me -- your old friend from the Mauretania?" "Good heavens, Ballem", I mumbled anxiously; "Get me out of here. Please!" Quite unintentionally I had arrived head-bandaged and clad in "strange naval uniform" at #10 Canadian Field Ambulance with RCAMC Captain "Medic Mo" in charge.

When he next spoke saying "When you get to Basingstoke, my wife Gwen will be your physiotherapist", I surmised that he harboured no lasting grudge against me for my behaviour towards him during our trans-Atlantic crossing together aboard HMT Mauretania some eight months previously (see PORTHOLE #3). Whatever his thoughts may have been, he immediately pumped me full of morphine and around midday sent me down the line.

My second revisit with Medic Mo took place in early 1945 when we bumped into one another in the Montreal Neurological Institute where he was on staff and I was being examined. I do not recall any part of our conversation or even if we actually engaged in one.

Then after a lapse of over forty years a third revisit occurred in an exchange of correspondence in connection with my research regarding RCN Beach Commando "W". In a 1988 letter to me from Texas, Medic Mo tongue-in-cheek's his personal view of our shared war-time experiences in these words:

> *My next memory is when I heard you were making eyes at my wife, who was a Physio at Basingstoke; until you caught her name and realized that you were, again, paying for your ill-treatment of me aboard the troopship.*

Regarding our first two meetings -- in November 1943 aboard HMT Maurentania (see PORTHOLE #3) and in July 1944 in Normandy -- Medic Mo further comments: "The reason, of course, that I have used it on many occasions as an example of coincidences!"

PORTHOLE #9

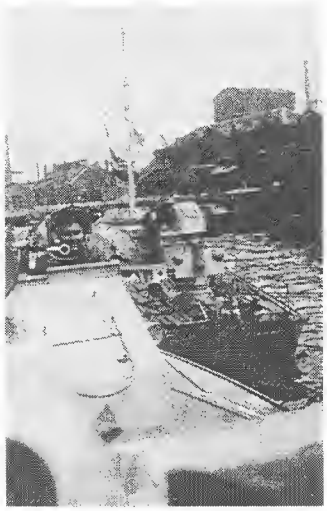


PORTHOLE #9 **The Boy who cried "Wolf"**

a) In France

In a Saturday July 1, 1944 signal, "W" Commando informed CNMO that the Maintenance Captain of HMS Vectis at Cowes had granted it nine days leave to commence the following Monday. That same Saturday I found out during an off-duty drive by jeep along the UK south coast that the RCAF's #127 Spitfire Wing, in which my older brother was a pilot, had moved from Tangmere to Airstrip B.2 near Bayeux in France on June 15 (D+9). Deeming it highly improbable at this advanced stage of the invasion that "W" would ever be called into action, I decided to investigate ways of getting over to see him. Accordingly on Sunday I drove to HMS Hornet at Portsmouth where the 29th Canadian MTB flotilla was based. Having successfully pleaded my case before my friend Bob Moyse, Skipper of MTB #462, and after he had signalled CNMO as follows: "Intend embarking LT EG FINLEY RCNVR for passage today Monday 3 July", in less than twenty-four hours I leaped almost dry-shod ashore on to the Normandy beaches near Courseulles -- ejected, as it were, like a modern-day Jonah.

Just imagine! Here I was on nine-day leave, the first "W" beach commando to set foot on French soil, standing all alone amidst the bustling activity of Allied forces already four weeks into Operation NEPTUNE. Before too long I managed to hitch a ride in a jeep driven by a Canadian Army sergeant who was heading off in a southwesterly direction. On the outskirts of Bayeux we learned of the location of the B.2 Airstrip (Bazenville, near Crépon) and soon afterwards arrived at its guarded gate-entrance.



Canadian MTBs at Portsmouth
July 1944



Taking passage to Normandy
Aboard RCN's MTB #462
July 3, 1944

After a thankful farewell to my chauffeur and satisfying the military police that I was not a spy, I set off on foot towards a cluster of camouflaged tents a few hundred yards in the distance.

Authorized by King George to be called the "Wolf" squadron and flying Spitfires, #403 constituted one of the four comprising RCAF #127 Wing. Ever since arriving in Britain at the end of 1943 the "Wolf" squadron, in which my older brother Hartland was a pilot, had been my overseas home. When granted leave, I'd often visit and stay at their station near Kenley in Surrey and so came to know most of the pilots and ground crew.

Upon reaching the dispersal area, I found out that my brother wasn't due to return from a sweep for about a half-hour. What then to do in the interim? Egged on by some off-duty pilots who greeted me warmly and under the direction of the medical officer and a couple of his staff, I became instantaneously transformed into a head-bandaged and barely-ambulatory war casualty. Hardly was my disguise completed than communication control announced the imminent landing of all nine #403 Spitfires. My fellow conspirators immediately hid me in a nearby tent which the returning pilots would soon be passing on their way to the debriefing area. Recognizing my brother as he came off the runway carrying his parachute, I slowly emerged from my hiding place, complete with crutches and fully-bandaged head, limping awkwardly to intercept him.

RCAF #127 Spitfire Wing, B.2 Airstrip, Bazenville, Normandy

Pilots relaxing

July 4, 1944





Some of the Top Brass,
including "Mike",
the Groupie's great dane

Summer 1944

(Left to Right)

S/L E.P. "Eep" Wood; unknown; S/L "Cam" McArthur, M.D.;
S/L W.A.G. "Wally" Conrad; W/C R.W. "Buck" McNair;
unknown; W/C Father Brown; W/C R.A. "Bob" Buckham;
G/C W.R. "Iron Bill" MacBrien

"My God, Gattie Boy", he sputtered out anguishingly as our eyes met, "what in hell happened to you?" "Oh, Hattie", I mumbled almost inaudibly, "The Gerries really clobbered us on the beaches". His face and parachute fell simultaneously. Silence ensued. But after a minute or two, on hearing some giggling and noticing a few smiling faces in the background, he gradually realized that the whole affair was just a prank.

That evening #403 Squadron celebrated the completion of Hart's first tour of operations and two days later, after writing the following joint Air Letter home, he and I flew back to England as passengers aboard an Avro Anson fully loaded with Allied wounded ("will never forget spectacle", as my diary records) and landed on the south coast at Bognor Regis:

> *5th July 1944. Somewhere in France. Dearest Mother. Hart & I are together again. You'll have to wait till later to hear all the details. Both join in all our love to you. Skip. Hart. Cheers!"*

At Hart's former Tangmere station where we figured on spending the night before heading up to London next morning to continue our leave together, an urgent message announced the cancellation of "W"'s nine-day leave and ordered me to return immediately to my ship on the Isle of Wight.

W/C Buckham (left) and F/L Finley
examine a German Luger pistol
at
RCAF #127 Spitfire Wing
B.2 Airstrip
Bazenville, Normandy
July 1944





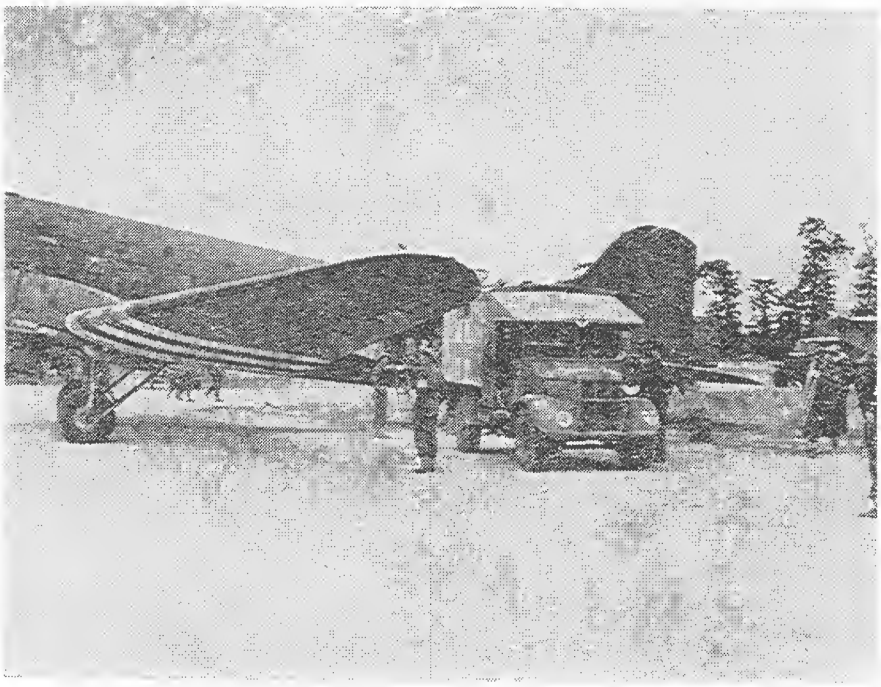
PORTHOLE #9 **The Boy who cried "Wolf"**

b) In England

By the time I arrived back aboard HMS Vectis (Pines Camp), about three quarters of "W" Commando's eighty-man complement had already sailed for Courseulles in Normandy to relieve RN Beach Commando "P" which, by then, had been handling operations on to and off of JUNO sector's "Mike" beach for the entire four weeks since D-Day on June 6. Not until July 16 did the remaining "W" members (including myself) who "missed the boat" manage to join up with the others in Normandy.

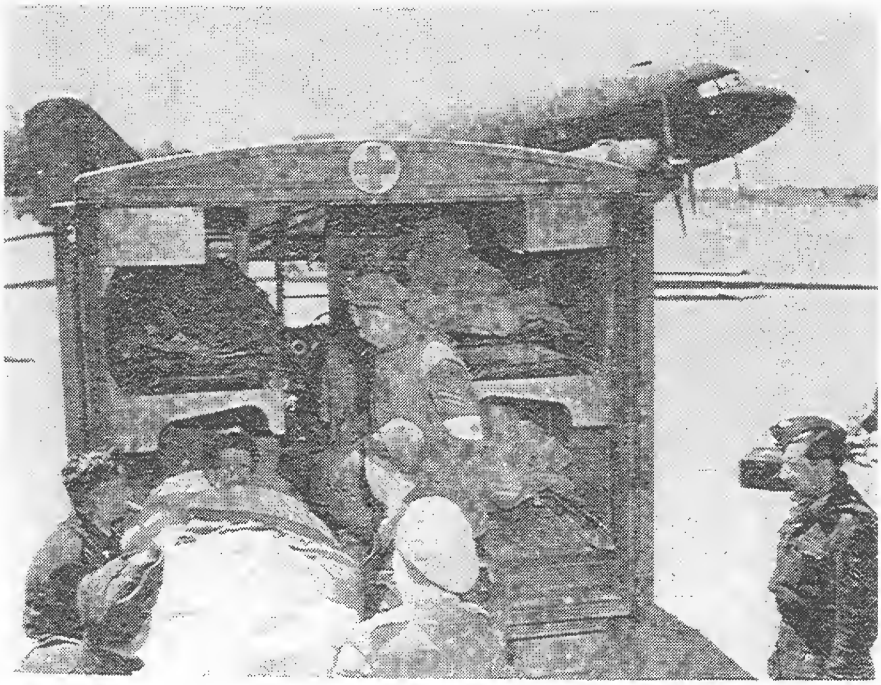
After breakfast on July 23 while driving in my jeep with Lt. Jack Cronin (ABM in W-3) as a passenger, a big explosion suddenly occurred about ten yards away to our right. Automatically I tried to apply the brakes but, before this intention produced any effect, the jeep had veered off the road and come to a jolting halt in the deep left-hand ditch. "My God", Jack yelled, "you've been hit in the head!"

My next conscious recollection was being told by a nurse that I was in a Canadian hospital (Basingstoke Neurological and Plastic Surgery). Subsequently I would learn from my medical records that after receiving first-aid at #3 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, my head was operated on during the early evening by an RAMC captain of #6 MNSU which was attached to #75 General Hospital at Bayeux and that thirty-six hours afterwards I had been air-evacuated to Swindon and then ambulanced to Basingstoke.



CASUALTIES BEING LOADED INTO DAKOTA AIRCRAFT

An ambulance backs up to the double doors of a Dakota to transfer wounded, Normandy, 16 June 1944. The photograph below shows a soldier, wounded in the fighting at the front, being transferred from an army ambulance to an aircraft at an airfield in Normandy, 17 June 1944. Once in England, Canadian casualties, except emergency cases, were immediately sent to one of the Canadian general hospitals there.



(Of passing interest it may be noted that all head-injured British service personnel who arrived at Swindon normally went by special train to St. Hughs College hospital at Oxford.)

So here I was at the same hospital in which, following a near fatal crash-landing in his Spitfire seven months prior to the invasion, Bob Pentland had been a quadraplegic patient before returning to Canada where, as head physiotherapist at Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue military hospital near Montreal, Mother treated him for several months. Bob was my brother Hart's best friend in the "Wolf" squadron and many of us had visited him at Basingstoke.

My wound consisted of metal fragments (probably from an 88mm shell, though also possibly from my steel helmet) lodged in the skull's right temporal region with resultant left-side hemiplegia. After a week I dictated a short letter home to Mother, and the doctor, who was in charge of neurosurgery at the hospital and had looked after Bob, kindly added the following note:

> *Skip is doing well & actually will be up in a few days. His left arm & leg are not working very well yet we anticipate considerable improvement. His memory is vague only for events immediately before & after the injury, & is now again good. Please don't worry. Do give my regards to Bob Pentland. [signed: Col.] Harry Botterell.*



Dr. Harry

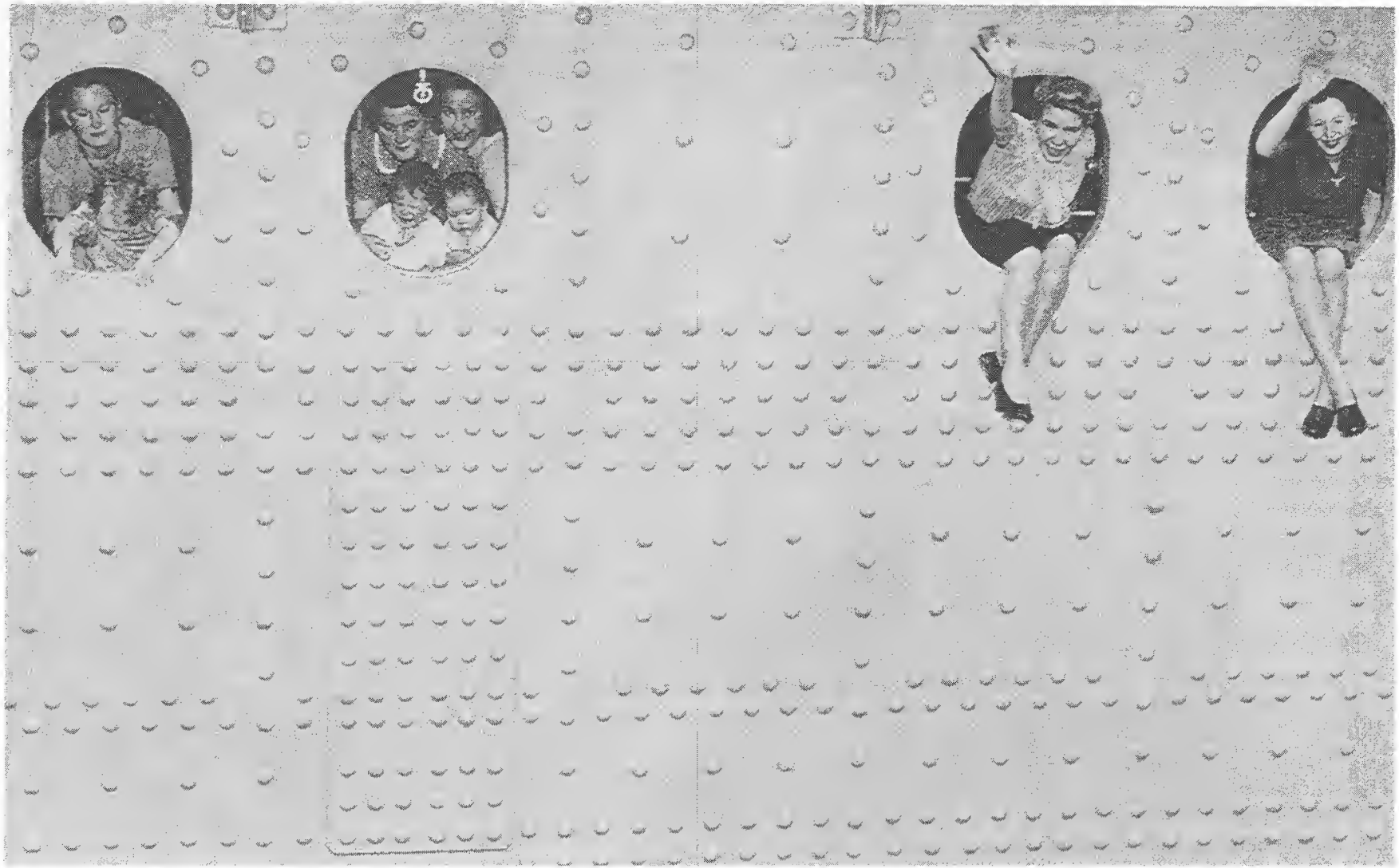


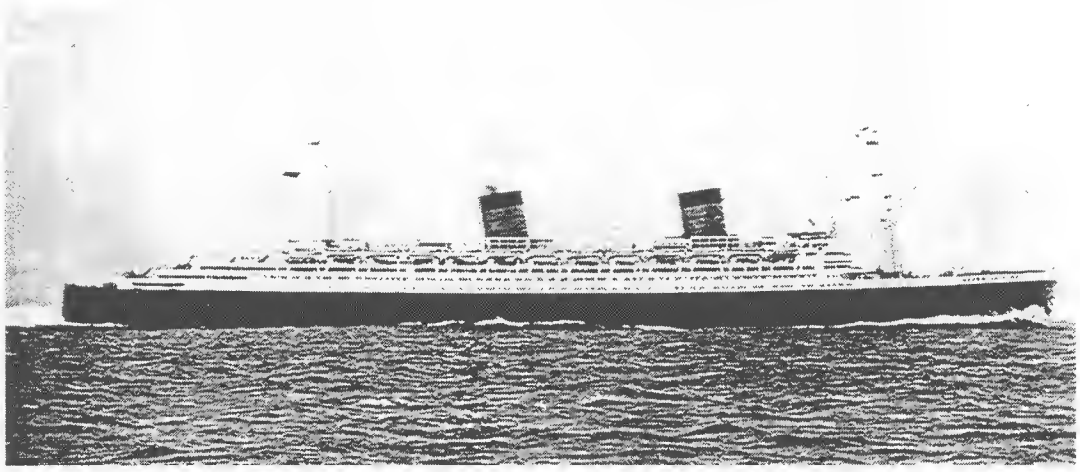


View of Hackwood Park's BNPS hospital buildings
taken from a Spitfire aircraft in May 1945

Meanwhile the hospital administration had been trying to contact my brother. They finally succeeded in tracing him to an RAF Spitfire training station in northern England. However, having been bitten once only recently and suspecting trickery again, it evidently necessitated several telephone calls and the personal assurance of Col. Botterell himself before he could be convinced that lying there in BN & PS hospital, seriously wounded by the Huns on the beaches of Normandy, was the Boy who cried "Wolf" less than a month previously in France. Needless to say, I greatly appreciated when Hart paid me a much undeserved two-day visit at Basingstoke.

PORTHOLE #10





HMT QUEEN ELIZABETH

1938	Sept. 27 --	Launched by Queen Elizabeth
1940	Mar. 2 --	Secret maiden voyage, Clyde to New York
	Nov. 13 --	Sailed for Singapore to be fitted out as a troop carrier
1941	April --	In convoy with HMT QUEEN MARY left Sydney carrying 6,500 troops
1941-1945	--	Carried some 800,000 Allied service personnel and travelled half a million miles
1946	Oct. 16 --	First peace-time voyage
1967	Sept. --	"FINISHED WITH ENGINES"

PORTHOLE #10 **The Senior Senior Service**

In connection with Operation NEPTUNE, which constituted the naval part of the 1944 Allied invasion of Normandy, the Royal Canadian Navy manned several dozen warships, five landing craft flotillas, and a beach commando. The latter eighty-five member unit, which was officially designated as RCN Beach Commando "W", served on Juno sector's "Mike" and "Nan" beaches. Having helped establish a permanent beachhead in this area, from which the combined Canadian and British armies attacked southwards and eventually captured Caen, Beach Commando "W" returned to their base on the Isle of Wight and disbanded at the end of August. After a short leave, most of "W"'s seventy odd ratings were drafted to HMCS Niobe, Canada's naval establishment at Gourock in Scotland, to await repatriation. A few days later great excitement spread among these Combined Operations ratings as word leaked our that the trans-Atlantic crossing would be made aboard the 80,000-ton troopship Queen Elizabeth ("QE").

However, the initial feeling of exhilaration became tempered somewhat soon after the group boarded the giant liner early on the morning of Monday, September 11. Two accidents which occurred on the ship earlier in the week had apparently activated the rumour mill and created a certain sense of foreboding throughout the ship.

One accident happened at 2030 hours the previous Thursday night as the "QE" lay at anchor in the Firth of Clyde. Two American top sergeants (named Mikowski and Blomberg), who manned one of the ship's defensive guns, were carrying out routine Anti-Sabotage patrol when Blomberg, upon seeing a suspicious-looking figure in the dark, fired a shot from his pistol at what he took to be a saboteur. In fact he had

THE QE's AFT DECKS

upon arrival in New York

June 1945



wounded his own buddy who was rushed to the nearby Greenock Royal Infirmary and successfully operated on for the removal of a bullet from his abdomen.

The second accident took place on the evening of September 10, just a few hours before the RCN beach commandos began embarking. Sturnmann Julius Gersbach, a German PoW, was being escorted by a steward to dump some mess-hall litter overboard when he slipped on the sill at the bottom of a staircase and fell head-long through an open doorway into the Firth of Clyde. The escorting steward immediately sounded the alarm which soon brought Assistant Steward P.V. Davis onto the scene. Noting the general commotion and hearing "gurgling" sounds, Davis shone a flashlight out into the darkness and saw a pair of hands about twenty yards away. After quickly removing his shoes he dove into the water and despite considerable difficulty managed to pull Gersbach safely to a rope ladder which in the meantime had been lowered over the side. [N.B. A translation of the PoW's statement regarding the incident reads: "I was ordered to empty a wooden box filled with paper through an opening (door) in the side of the ship. I thought it was a coal-hole. I slipped and fell into the water."]

It should be pointed out that, except for US Army personnel who made up the gun crews, the large majority of the permanent ship's company consisted of British military types. Upon venturing below decks to locate their assigned sleeping quarters, the beach commandos discovered that the Brits had already taken possession of the best (namely,

the lower) bunks in every six-berth cabin. Therefore, partly in gest but admittedly also in a show of national solidarity, the Canadian matelots promptly set about transferring all RN-owned gear into the middle and upper bunks, and stowing their own in the now vacated lowers.

While there is virtually no cessation of loading general stores on to a major trooper whenever she is in port, embarkation of passengers in this case commenced Sunday morning, September 10 and was completed some thirty-six hours later. The official report of this voyage, designated as Convoy TA [i.e. Trans-Atlantic westbound] 146, lists the following statistics for selected units and categories embarked:

R.C.N.		304 (33 officers, 271 ratings)
Brit. Merchant Marine		188
U.S. Army		952 (877 being battle casualties)
U.S. Navy		356
German PoWs		3597 (227 officers, 3370 ORs)
Ship's Staff (officers)		
Commandant	22	
Air Force	11	
R.N.	4	
Brit. Army	122	159
TOTAL		*5556

*Counting Civilians (372) and all others, there were actually over seven thousand persons aboard.

Anchors finally weighed at 1530 hours and, because of German submarine threats, two R.N. destroyers took up station ahead to act as escort during the next thirty-six hours. Enemy submarine activity also prompted Admiralty authorities both to set Convoy TA 146's course south of Eire (north being the regular route) and also to instruct the Captain to make more frequent course deviations than usual. Scarcely had the "QE" left here anchorage than a Limey-accented order, thrice repeated, blared out clearly over the ship's loudspeaker system:

> *Attention! Attention! Canadian Commonwealth Colonial Navy fall in Promenade deck portside on the double!!*

The entire 304 Canadian naval personnel listened in disbelief as to how they were being addressed, and only from disciplined habit did they, albeit reluctantly, dutifully respond to the order. As soon as they had mustered, an R.N. Chief Petty Officer divided them into three groups: 1. Officers; 2. CPOs, POs, & Leading Seamen; 3. ABs & ODs. Having dismissed Groups 1 and 2, he told Group 3 that from henceforth they were to obey only orders given by R.N. personnel. Then, after informing them what duties they would be expected to carry out during the voyage and where daily lists were posted, he told them to "Fall out"! While there was no general objection by the hundred or so ratings in Group 3 to being assigned duty as such or to the particular duties themselves, a united opposition and even animosity <u>did</u> develop spontaneously to the high-handed (and voiced) manner in which they came to be treated. And over the next twenty-four hours certain incidents occurred to lend support to their dissatisfaction.

For instance, while standing watch as "spare" loaders at a fo'c's'le gun station, ABs Albrechtson and Watkins (both of whom had been members of R.C.N. Beach Commando "W") were flabbergasted and insulted when, on making his rounds, the duty R.N. "cookie" offered coffee and doughnuts to the regular U.S. Army gun crews but completely ignored them. They subsequently found out that similar treatment was accorded to many of their buddies. Initially the Americans thought it was either simply an oversight or just a little joke, but when the practice persisted, they became uncomfortable and quite sympathetic to the Canadians.

Then there was an incident where Sig. T/O Lefaivre, who had just stood the previous middle watch (midnight to 0400), was rudely awakened and dumped out of his hammock by an R.N. "killick" at 0530 because of a supposed emergency which turned out to be a purposely set false alarm.

When others in the Combined Operations group (which included landing craft and beach commando ratings) experienced similar treatment in connection with practically every assigned duty, an attitude of impatience soon turned into an undercurrent of bitterness and even hostility.

On the second day out, beach commando AB Smith pretended not to hear an R.N. Petty Officer's order to carry out some minor order and just nonchantly and silently stood his ground. After repeating the order twice (the second time in an extra loud voice only inches from Smith's ear) and receiving neither verbal acknowledgment nor physical reaction, the PO told Smith he was under arrest and would be placed on the First Lieutenant's report. For his misbehaviour, Smith was "sentenced to cells" and spent the

remainder of the voyage alone in a lower-deck, guarded, chicken-wired enclosure similar to the six-man type occupied by some 3,600 German PoWs. Within twenty-four hours, having refused to carry out comparable minor orders, five additional Combined Operations ratings (three from the Beach Commando and two from the LCI(L) flotillas) also landed up in individual cells with no communication between them. By including Smith, the group thereafter became referred to by their buddies as "The Gang of Six".

By this time R.A.F. Group Captain A.K. Ashden, the Ship Commandant for Convoy TA 146, must have been somewhat concerned lest the situation get out of hand. Up until then he had been primarily preoccupied with finding suitable quarters for some nine hundred American battle casualties, of whom 427 were stretcher cases. Since the QE's hospital capacity was only around 200, two of the ship's main lounges as well as its library were taken over at the last moment in order to rectify what had obviously been a gross miscalculation. Besides causing considerable medical inconveniences, these take-overs significantly reduced recreational space which in turn helped create and sustain a generally negative atmosphere among the passengers. In his official Voyage Report, Lt.Col. J.H. Armstrong notes that all those concerned, including the Cunard White Star Line's Deputy Chairman, agreed that the "QE" was simply "not fitted to carry such large numbers of casualties and prisoners-of-war at the same time." "A very difficult medical situation" is the phrase used by an R.A.F. Wing Commander in his capacity as Senior Medical Officer.

Apparently no additional Canadian ratings ended up "in the brig". Subject no.6 entitled DISCIPLINE in the official report reads as follows:

> *Discipline on board the ship was fair, there being difficulty maintaining discipline amongst the Royal Canadian Navy Draft, which consisted of a large number of Naval Commandos. However, towards the end of the voyage, the situation was greatly improved.*

Prior to reaching New York, the "Gang of Six" was informed that they would be sent under escort of a special Canadian naval guard to Halifax with a recommendation from the "QE"'s Commandant that H.M.C.S. Peregrine's Commanding Officer apply all sections of K.R. & A.I. which pertained to their indiscipline. In simple naval jargon, the recommendation was "to throw the book at them."

Led by the large contingent of prisoners, disembarkation at Pier 90 in New York commenced early on the afternoon of September 17 and took less than twenty-four hours to complete. Unfortunately a few in the CO group would never again see some of the pieces of their luggage which had been stowed in the cargo hold. Pilfering was one obvious reason but the general bedlam prevailing on and around the docks certainly didn't help in claiming or holding on to all one's personal gear. Among the amusing incidents which eased the tensions of the moment was AB Nelson's dismay when a U.S. custom's official, upon feeling the unusual weight of the Canadian sailor's hammock, made him unravel the seven hitches and open it up. The net result? One confiscated British tommy gun obtained on the Normandy beaches and one disappointed souvenir hunter.

With time to kill before entraining for Halifax, the whole CO group gratefully accepted the kind invitation of the nearby Brooklyn Navy Yard employees to what proved to be a sumptuous lunch of seemingly endless delicious dishes, the likes of which they'd probably not even dreamed about for a year or more.

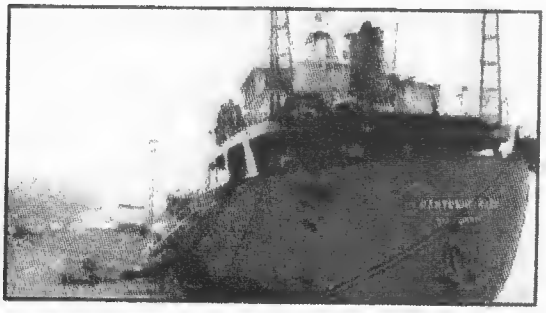
En route to "Slackers" (the affectionate nickname given to "an East Coast Canadian Port"), a potentially embarrassing moment happened when the penniless CO group members realized they could not leave the customary tips for dining-car services. But the situation was resolved by the waiters themselves who, sensing the matelots' predicament, gave a thunderous round of applause and tipped their hats in appreciation for the service rendered by these returning combat veterans. The pièce de résistance of arriving back in North America occurred later that night when each rating eventually crawled between the white cotton sheets in his own private lower berth.

Arrival in Halifax brought on mixed emotions because the Gang was taken directly to H.M.C.S. Peregrine and paraded before the Commanding Officer. In a lengthy opening address, the C.O. clearly and in minute detail pointed out that they had each committed the equivalent of a mutinous act. Then, being careful neither to condone nor to minimize the serious nature of such misbehaviour, he eventually concluded his remarks by declaring that because of certain extenuating circumstances and as an act of mercy on his part for this occasion, he would drop all charges brought against the six whom he thereupon identified by rating, full name, and official number.

Upon dismissal and before rejoining their CO comrades to proceed on foreign service leave, the "Gang of Six" stopped in at the canteen and mutually conceded they'd doubtlessly forever remember this recent week-long experience initiated and largely controlled by the Senior Senior Service.

PORTHOLE #11





PORTHOLE #11 **Not Serious Enough?**

Probably sometime in 1941 Gus Pentland's two sons, Bill and Bob, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in their Calgary hometown with the intention of becoming fighter pilots. As recent highschool graduates, both were athletically talented, particularly in badminton where they had acquired both the Alberta provincial junior doubles title and also seventeen-inch necks.

In the course of earning their wings in Canada under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, they met up with my elder brother Hartland who similarly had his sights set on eventually flying Hurricanes or Spitfires. Hart and Bob formed a strong friendship bond when, as a result of being stationed together in Ottawa, they played on the RCAF Uplands football team which included the great Tony Golab and which won the CFL's 1941 Eastern Division title.

Whenever Bob or Bill visited Montreal on furlough, they'd invariably bunk down in our home, where they came to be accepted as family members. In passing it may be noted that not only did both my parents see considerable World War I service -- father with the Black Watch and Mother with the Voluntary Aid Detachment -- but throughout World War II and until her 1955 resignation, Mother worked as a physiotherapist in the federal military hospital at Ste. Anne-de-Bellevue.

WORLD WAR I

My Mother to be



MISS E. MARJORIE ROSS, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John W. Ross, of Montreal, one of the young Canadian V.A.D's., who is nursing in Gifford House Auxiliary Hospital, Roehampton, S.W. England. She is a niece of Lieut.-Col. James G. Ross, C.M.G., Chief Paymaster of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

VADs were dubbed
VERY ARTFUL DARLINGS

My Father to be



Wounded at Vimy Ridge
with the 42nd Battalion,
Royal Highlanders of Canada
(Black Watch),
Capt. (later Maj.) E.B. Finley, MC,
is pictured here
at the time
of his March 1918 investiture
in London

Bill, the elder Pentland brother, was posted as a Pilot Officer early in 1942 to an RCAF fighter squadron in England and soon achieved an impressive operational record. Towards the end of the year, Bob and Hart, by then Pilot Officers, also proceeded to the UK where they underwent short training stints on Typhoons and Hurricanes before joining RCAF #403 Squadron at Kenley in Surrey to fly Spitfires.

On the first of December, 1943, as an RCNVR lieutenant, I disembarked from HMT Mauretania at Liverpool and headed off to HMS ARMADILLO at Ardentinny on Loch Long to commence Combined Operations training as an Assistant Beachmaster with the newly-formed, 85-member, RCN Beach Commando "W".

Having learned shortly after that Christmas leave for my unit coincided roughly with Hart's and Bob's, we made reservations at the North British Hotel in Edinburgh to start December 23. Since my leave actually began on the 22nd, I took advantage of an invitation to stay overnight in Glasgow with Nellie and Tina Dansken, two never-before-met, elderly, maiden, Scottish, great aunts -- always referred to in our Canadian family circle as "the Scotch cousins".

After receiving the warmest of welcomes, being treated (despite war-time shortages) to a truly royal banquet, and then entertained till almost midnight by Nellie's loud, shrill, off-key singing voice and by Tina's exuberant accompaniment on their out-of-tune piano, I despaired of ever getting to sleep afterwards, having laughed and giggled myself into a state of utter exhaustion. No part of our first three weeks of commando training had come even close to leaving me in such a weakened condition.

WORLD WAR II

R.T. Pentland



H.R. Finley

RCAF Flying Officers
lounge beside a Typhoon at an OTU
air base in England
June 6, 1943



F/L W.H. Pentland beside a Spitfire
Northwest Africa, 1943

As S/L, DFC,
he was killed Oct. 20, 1944 in Europe
on what was to have been
the last mission
of his second tour of operations

Finding myself after next morning réveille none the worse for the previous evening's revelry, and having dutifully conquered a mountain of delicious steaming "parritch" [i.e. porridge] and done justice to endless volumes of yellowing family photographs. I profusely thanked my hostesses, promised to visit again, and descended the outside staircase to their Kirklee Quadrant flat off the Great Western Road. During the ensuing train ride to Edinburgh my thoughts shifted towards the near-at-hand rendezvous with Bob and Hart whom I had last seen just a year before in Halifax where they were awaiting trans-Atlantic passage to the UK. In relation to those bygone days, two particular events clearly crossed my mind as we pulled out of Glasgow station.

The first centered around my introducing Hart and Bob and several of their RCAF comrades to "pusser" navy rum at parties aboard our fairmile, HMCM/L "Q-092", which at the time was assigned to "loop patrol" duties outside the harbour gate-vessels. The second event occurred the morning of the day their troopship sailed. Hart, with me accompanying him, entered a florist ship on Barrington Street and proceeded to order some flowers. At first I paid little attention to his actions, presuming that he was probably just sending a bouquet to Mother, in which case I would gladly share any cost. But when in response to the salesperson asking him: "To whom are the flowers to be addressed?", he replied "Miss Betty Stewart, 27 Carleton Avenue, Westmount, Montreal", my ears pricked up as I went on full alert. Good grief, I said to myself, but that's my girl-friend.

It was around noon when I approached the Registration desk at the North British Hotel and enquired about our reservation. Upon stating my name, the receptionist responded rather casually: "Welcome, Lt. Finley", adding, after a brief pause: "There's a message been here for you a couple of days". Opening the envelope handed to me, the telegram inside read: "Bob seriously injured. Leave cancelled. Suggest you come down here." I was dumbfounded!

Later in the evening as I boarded the train to London, it occurred to me that, although due to an entirely different reason, for the second successive night, sleep would probably not come easily. By lunchtime next day I had arrived at Hart's air-field south of London and learned the circumstances which caused Bob's injury. On a December 20th morning "ramrod" mission over France he was credited with damaging a Focke-Wolf 190 but during an afternoon scramble his Spitfire had been extensively raked by enemy cannon shells on his return from the Continent. Trying desperately to make it back safely to the Kenley aerodrome, he crash landed on the edge of the runway and sustained severe multiple injuries. With great difficulty and under the supervision of Cam McArthur, the Squadron's chief medical officer, Bob was eventually extricated from his totally-wrecked plane and rushed by ambulance to the RCAMC's Basingstoke Neurological and Plastic Surgery hospital.

The day before Christmas, Cam, Hart and I motored to Basingstoke and visited Bob briefly. Although conscious and seemingly able to recognize us, he appeared quite disoriented as a result of his experience some hundred hours earlier. After confering with Lt. Col. E. Harry Botterell, the hospital's chief neurosurgeon, Cam told us that

S/L C. McArthur, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer
#127 RCAF Spitfire Wing
B.2 Airstrip
Bazenville, Normandy
Summer 1944



although Bob's life no longer appeared to be in danger, his quadraplegic condition would likely continue indefinitely. Repatriated to Canada in March 1944 on a hospital ship, he spent several months at Ste Anne's military hospital where Mother administered and supervised his physiotherapy treatment. Transferred to Colonel Belcher Hospital in Calgary towards the end of the war, Bob subsequently married Marie, one of his nurses. However, for the remainder of his life, he remained confined to a wheel chair or the specially designed bed in their humble home where he died a few years later from liver and kidney complications.

Christmas 1943 and New Years 1944 came and went, and as springtime approached it became increasingly evident that the invasion of the Continent was not far off. D-Day finally dawned on June 6 and some four weeks later RCN Beach Commando "W", which had been waiting in the wings, was ordered by the British Admiralty to take charge of landing craft disembarkations on Juno sector's "Mike" and "Nan" beaches in Normandy.

In order to understand the thrust from here on of this present PORTHOLE, the reader should take note of certain paragraphs of the RCN's Naval Order 3741 which came into effect on June 24, 1944 and was entitled "Casualties --- Procedures for Reporting". Extracts from paragraphs relevant to our purpose state:

> [1.] "In the event of death or serious injury or illness occurring in sea-going ships of the Royal Canadian Navy, ..., whether through enemy action or not, particulars are to be reported to Naval Service Headquarters as soon as possible by telegram or W/T, repeated to their administrative authority, R.C.N. Depot and Accounting Base."



NORMANDY BEACHES
JUNE 6 1944

2. "In the case of Canadian Naval personnel serving in H.M. ships serving in European waters, notification will be sent by signal to the Canadian Naval Mission Overseas, repeated to the operational authority, Admiralty, High Commissioner for Canada and H.M.C.S. "Niobe". The C.N.M.O. is to advise N.S.H.Q. and R.C.N. Depot, Halifax."

4. "Next of kin will be informed of such casualties by Naval Service Headquarters in all cases except (a) those covered by *Paragraph 7 below, and (b) where next of kin reside in United Kingdom, who are to be informed by the Canadian Naval Mission Overseas, upon obtaining Admiralty approval for release."

Around ten o'clock in the morning of July 23rd, while driving a jeep with Lt. Jack Cronin (a fellow Assistant Beachmaster) seated to my right and almost simultaneously on hearing a cry of "Get the hell out of here!" emanate from a group of Allied soldiers taking cover behind a nearby hedge-row, a huge explosion suddenly shook the ground a few yards away on our starboard side! I immediately hit the brakes and applied full opposite rudder to the steering wheel as we veered sharply off the road towards a steep embankment. A few seconds later our jeep came to an abrupt halt in the lefthand ditch. "My God", Jack yelled, "You've been hit, Skip!". On reaching up to my right temple and noting that my steel helmet had gone **AWOL, my fingers entered a batch of warm blood. In attempting to get out of the jeep in the usual way, I discovered that both my left arm and leg were powerless to carry my weight, so my exit had to be achieved by rolling over and bailing out. Then, before lapsing into unconsciousness, I vaguely recall trying to drag myself along the ditch to a less exposed location in case the enemy

*Paragraph 7 deals with "the next of kin of casualties occurring locally, i.e., in establishments in Canada and Newfoundland or in the immediate vicinity thereof,....."

**Away without leave.



"Skip" at the Wheel of a Jeep
Normandy, July 1944

shelling resumed.

Apart from being badly shaken up, Jack apparently came through the incident relatively unscathed and remained with "W" Beach Commando until it returned to England and disbanded four weeks later. However, and because our paths never again crossed, I unfortunately do not have his firsthand account of what happened to me after becoming unconscious.

According to Capt. F.E.J. Gabel, an RCAMC doctor with #10 Field Ambulance who gave me morphine and anti-tetanus shots* two hours later, I probably would have been picked up by a Canadian Red Cross jeep. Capt. C.M. Ballem, another #10 F.A. RCAMC doctor (whom we have already met as "Medic Mo" in PORTHOLE #3 and PORTHOLE #8), provides an amusing commentary on these several events in his August 23, 1988 response to my May 19/88 letter to him:

*For a chronological list of all medical records and documents referred to in the text, see Appendix.



Badge and Flashes worn on Battle Dress
by RCN Beach Commandos



Head-Wound Casualty receiving Blood Plasma at an Advanced
Dressing Station to combat Shock preparatory to Evacuation
European Theatre 1944

Of course I remember you, how could I forget?! Especially after my kindness in finding you a bunk, you repaid me by razzing me all the way to Liverpool. The only way I'd be able to get my own back would be to meet you in a beach dressing station.....
The 10th F.A. had been pulled back into rest near Caen at the time of your arrival. I was not actually on duty, but happened to be there when you came in with your strange "naval uniform". You were being cared for and your head was all bandaged, when I came over and spoke to you, (as I remember, you were called "Skip" in those days). I recall picking up your tag, reading the name and saying, "Hello, Skip; do you remember me?...Your old friend from the Mauretania?". Your reply was, "Oh, my heavens Ballem! Get me out of here!" We put you aboard an ambulance and sent you back down the line.*
.....I am very sure about the fact that you did speak to me at the 10th Field Ambulance; and you did plead with me to forget all about the shabby treatment of me when I was sick and suffering on that horrible ship!.....
The reason, of course, that I remember the story so clearly, is because of the fact that I've used it on many occasions as an example of coincidences!

With my Field Card marked "serious", I left #10 F.A. near Faubourg de Vaucelles shortly after noon and headed "down the line" to a Casualty Clearing Station. "En route C.C.S.", my medical record notes, "the ambulance was dive-bombed by FW 190s. Tho' the vehicle was completely demolished & other patients killed, this man was not further hurt, tho' found unconscious."

At 1320 I arrived at #3 Canadian C.C.S. on the outskirts of Sequeville-en-Bassin where RCAMC Capt. S.E. Evans entered the following on to my file: "1430: Admitted to Resus. Bp. 125/65. Pupils equal. Arousable. Evacuate -- Priority I." My next move to Bayeux is well described by RAMC Capt. E.A. Turner who came eventually to perform an operation on my head at #6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit, which was attached to the 75th British General Hospital at Bayeux. In his 7th June 1988 letter to me, he writes:

*The RCN Beach Commando "W" uniform consisted of khaki battledress, leather jerkin, and regular naval cap (or steel helmet). A Combined Operations badge as well as "Canada" and "Commando" flashes were worn on each arm of the battledress jacket.



Casualties evacuated from Forward Area by Jeep Ambulance
being transferred to Standard Ambulance
for trip to nearest Field Medical Installation
Normandy, June 1944

...you would be transferred to #6 MNSU from your Casualty Clearing Station as a routine, since you had a penetrating brain wound. It was either that or go to a Canadian Mobile Neurological Unit. There was a Canadian Unit, but my recollection is that it did not function immediately, and until it opened we treated the Canadian head injuries as well as the British ones. Even after the Canadian Unit opened we continued to treat some Canadian casualties, as the two armies were fighting close together and the lines of communication and evacuation were in proximity, and no distinction was made for medical purposes. There would be no need to question the [Canadian] Casualty Clearing Station with regard to closing down. It might have done but this would not be the reason for the path taken by you in the course of your evacuation and treatment. We normally admitted all head injuries for assessment to see whether the case was urgent and required operation in the field. Your case was obviously of extreme urgency as pressure from intracranial bleeding was building up and you would have died if operation had been delayed even by the hours necessary to fly you back to England.

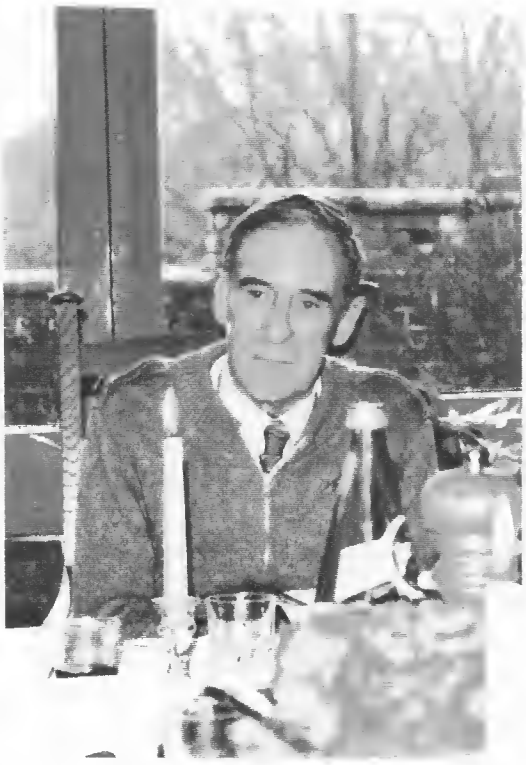
After examining me following my admittance to #6 MNSU at 1820, RAMC Capt. P.L.M. Hartley noted:

Rousable only with painful stimuli.....
Small rt. temporal penetrator.....
Motor System L hemiplegia complete
Sensory System L hemianaesthesia complete to P.P.
Reflexes L & R absent. Abdo present only on Rt
Pulse 58 falling to 52. This officer has probably got clot inside his skull causing pressure and should be operated upon fairly soon.

Dr. Eric A. Turner



Lt. (later Capt.) RAMC
No. 6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit
Northwest Europe
1944-45



Retired Neurosurgeon
Birmingham, England
c. 1978

Concerning the actual operation, which commenced at 2000, the record reads:

Name of operator Capt. E. A. Turner

Anaesthetic employed *Local.

Dura. Torn? Yes Intact?

Brain. Bruised? Lacerated? Yes Intact?

If infected? No evidence By what organism?

Penetrating R. temporal. Left hemiplegia arm and leg.

Other findings:--

No 6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit

Operation 23/7/44

Scalp incision R.temporal region vertically to include and excise the small entrance wound-muscle excised and bone nibbled to expose normal dura. Considerable venous bleeding controlled by diathermy and muscle. Track cleared in upwards, backwrd and medial direction for 8 cm-grating felt at bottom with soft rubber catheter but not with sucker. F.B. not removed-CSF welled up freely here. Sulphathiozole powder-closure in layers with corrugated rubber drain in upper end of wound. P.O.P. cap. - all bone fragments came out with the superficial intracerebral clot which was under considerable tension. At the end of the operation the patient could move L. arm and leg. PR. R↓ L↑

What foreign bodies removed? Bone fragments.

Drainage? Corrugated rubber drain.

Signature E.A. Turner Capt.
No. 6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit.

*Local instead of usual general anaesthetic would be used on occasion if there was urgency in an unconscious patient. (per E.A. Turner's June 7, 1988 letter to author)

The following constitutes an approximate reproduction of one of the medical documents which was completed after my operation.

No. 6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit

Operation Card for Head Injuries

(For distribution to Casualty Clearing Stations, Stationary and Base Hospitals)

(Field Card No. W.3118B should be filled in before operation.)

No. 0-23710 Name FINLEY G.F. Rank Lt.

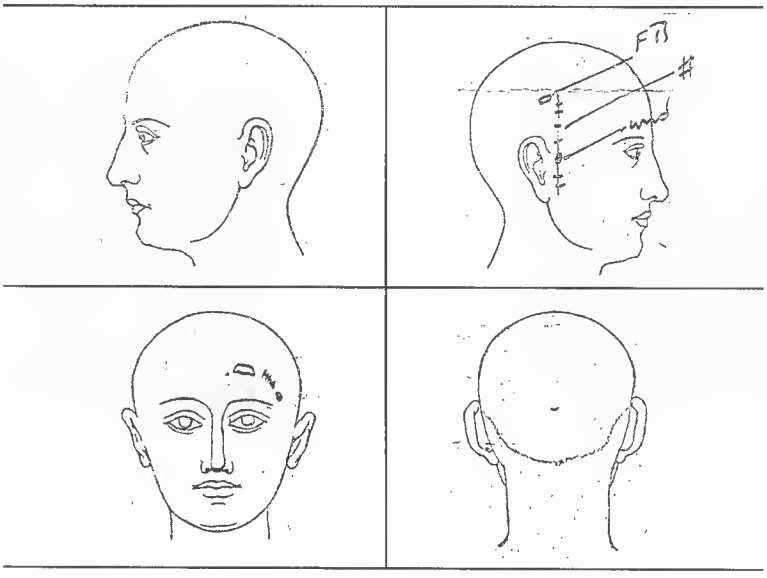
Unit R.C.N.V.R.

Date of operation 23/7/44. Time (in hours) between injury and operation 10 hrs

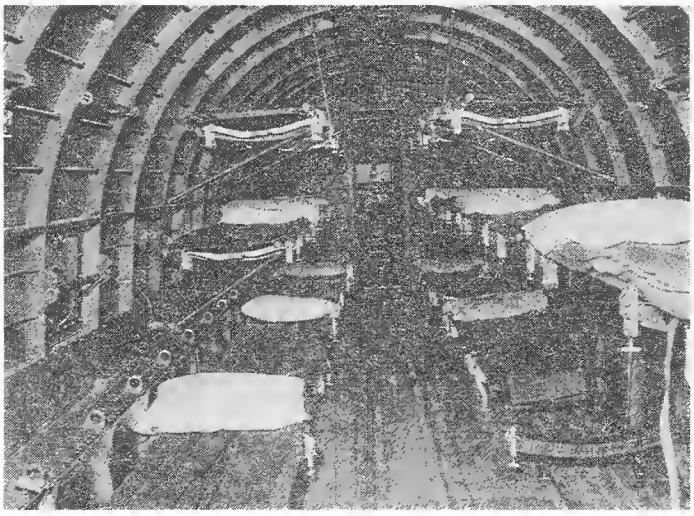
Situation of wounds (enter on diagrams) R. temporal

X-ray findings. Fracture? Yes F.B.? Yes Site of F.B.? R. temp. near mid-line

(Mark X-ray findings and diagrams)



AIR EVACUATION



Interior View of C-47 Dakota "SKYTRAIN" Aircraft
capable of carrying up to Twenty-Four reclining Patients



First Flights from Normandy
to UK of Canadian Casualties
began a Week after D-Day.
This scene occurred June 16.



A Wounded Soldier is being
made comfortable
by a Medical Orderly
prior to June 17 Flight to England

In his 7th June 1988 letter to me, Capt. Turner* reminisces:

> *With regard to the operation, this was clearly a matter of the greatest urgency. We did not wait for the routine x-ray of the skull, which was available in the vast majority of cases, and we did not apparently even wait for a general anaesthetic which again was the normal procedure. It seems obvious that you had lost consciousness before we operated and no delay was reckoned to be safe. You were apparently building up a dangerously high pressure from bleeding inside the head, and this was precisely the reason for our presence so near to the "front line".*

After an initial penicillin dose of 100,000 units, during the next two days (July 24 and 25), I received 50,000 units every six hours. About 8 p.m. on the 25th I was transported as a "lying/severe" case from Bayeux to Reviers and then air-evacuated on a Douglas Dakota (C-47) to Down Ampney near Swindon in England. While head-injured British service personnel would be taken from there by special train to St. Hugh's College at Oxford, I travelled by ambulance to Basingstoke where the RCAMC ran Canada's Neurological and Plastic Surgery hospital. En route to Basingstoke, where we arrived at 0030, I recall -- my first memory since "conversing" with Medic Mo at #10 Field Ambulance some sixty hours previously -- having a horrendous headache, on the verge of vomiting, and being violently shaken about inside the vehicle.

Now before continuing with an account of medical treatment which I received after being admitted to the Canadian hospital at Basingstoke, certain events regarding the reporting of my being injured on July 23rd will be described. The only official record of the incident which I have thus far come across in the National Archives of Canada

*Dr. Eric A. Turner was a 25-year-old RAMC Captain when he operated on me. After serving in Europe until the Allied armies crossed the Rhine, he went to the Far East via India, arriving in Malaya just after Japan had been atomic-bombed. From 1951 to his 1977 retirement, he held a consultant post in Birmingham. In 1988, during a trip to UK for our son's wedding, I spent a couple of hours with him and Mrs. Turner on Sunday evening, July 29th -- forty-four years, to the very week, after our first tête-à-tête.

consists of NOIC JUNO's 242332B naval message to Admiralty (repeated CNMO, HMCS Niobe, FOBAA, PBM Nan White) which states:

> *Regret to report Lt. ERIC FALT[sic] FINLEY RCNVR "W" suffered head injury due to shrapnel p.m. July 23rd Admitted to hospital next of kin Mrs. M. ROSE[sic] FINLEY 3940 Cote Des Neiges Apt. B.101 Montreal Canada.*

Whether either of the two Canadian addressees (CNMO or HMCS Niobe) subsequently informed NSHQ in Ottawa remains unknown, but Mrs. M. Ross Finley (my Mother and next of kin) never ever received any official notification. Which prompts the question as to why the Naval Order then applicable to reporting casualties (see page 29 above) was not carried out? Paragraph 4 reads:

> *Next of kin will be informed of such casualties by Naval Service Headquarters in all cases.....*

Since neither Mother nor anyone else could recall with certainty after the war when or from what source they first learned of my being wounded, the following provides some background as well as plausible explanations.

With "Thursday 20th July 1944 Somewhere in Normandy" written at the top of my Armed Forces Air Letter #27 to Mother, she would thus know, doubtlessly by the end of the month, that I had rejoined our Beach Commando "W" in France. In view of future developments, two particular comments in this letter warrant passing note. After "grub" on July 19, Jack Cronin and I drove to Bayeux and "stopped in at a Canadian Field Hospital where we met some darn fine nursing sisters. Jack & I are determined to return at our earliest opportunity". In another part of the letter, I call my not becoming engaged to my girlfriend back in Montreal as "... the best move by far. All the more so these days because one never knows what will turn up the next moment."

My own hunch is that word of my mishap reached Mother initially in Sqdr.Ldr. Bill Pentland's July 28th Air Letter to her from his RCAF fighter wing base in Normandy. Knowing somehow that our Commando was operating on JUNO sector beaches, Bill decided on his July 26 day-off to try and find me. Upon arrival at our location, he was dismayed to discover from Lt. Don Sutherland, Beachmaster for W-1 party, that three days previously I had been taken away for treatment of a gunshot head wound. The following day, after going through the records of several Casualty Clearing Stations in the area, Bill suddenly saw a list which noted that I had been shipped to a hospital on the outskirts of Bayeux. As his letter attests, enquiries at five British General Hospitals finally paid off:

> *I once more found Skip's name & purely by chance at the same moment, the doctor who had performed the operation. Evidently a very tiny piece of shrapnel had entered Skip's brain..... It is most probable that Skip will be now in the Canadian Neuro Hospital in Basingstoke...although no doubt you've had news by now.*

Assuming that delivery of Air Letters to Canada from Normandy took no longer than ten days, Mother would receive Bill's letter by August 7th. Meanwhile, three other possible ways by which Mother first received the news, all of which took form during the first week of August, will be mentioned shortly.

At this point our narrative returns to July 26th, 0030 hours, the time of my arrival at BN & PS hospital in Basingstoke, unconscious and, as a result of the long trip from Normandy, apparently quite exhausted too. Bed 1 in Ward 20 became by latest home port. However, and despite my condition, at 0300 Lt. Col. E. Harry Botterell, who was the hospital's chief neurosurgeon, requested a laboratory examination of a swab

specimen from the wound. And over the next several days, besides continuing penicillin and sulphadiozine injections, many different lab examinations and skull x-rays were carried out.

Although neither a precise hour nor even day is noted on my medical records, I gather that regaining full and continuous consciousness was in my case a gradual process. By the end of July I evidently recalled that the very bed I was lying in had, only seven months previously, been occupied by F.O. Bob Pentland, RCAF, whose Spitfire crash-landing had left him a paraplegic for life. Around the same time I remember with some trepidation having to confront Medic Mo's physiotherapist wife, Gwen, whom I feared might get back at me for mistreating her husband when he and I shared a "state-room" aboard HMT Mauretania en route to UK in November 1943. (see PORTHOLES #3 and #8)

The July 27 laboratory report on the swab specimen collected a couple of hours after my arrival the previous day indicated the presence of "staphylococcus albustit" in the head wound. By this time Capt. W.D. Stevenson, the Medical Officer i/c Case, had received a reply to his July 26 X-Ray Requisition. This incidentally represented the first x-ray taken since I was injured on July 23. The radiologist, Major D.C. Eaglesham, gave the following as his clinical diagnosis:

> SKULL:- There is a right parietal-squamous temporal cranial defect roughly semicircular and 5cm in its long dimension. This is obviously operative at the site of the injury. An intracranial metal Fb 5mmx15mmx10mm approx lies deep in the right hemisphere about 1cm from the mid line 6.5cm from the vertex and in the plane of the posterior margin of the defect.

> Between the Fb and the defect nearer the former there is a small collection of gas intracranially. No pineal shadow and no loose or depressed bone fragments.

A week later, following a second x-ray, the radiologist reported that "The intracranial gas collection has now disappeared" and the Fb "is in the same position as at the last examination-26 July 44."

By now the plaster head cover and the corrugated rubber drain in the wound would both have been removed. On August 1st the records describe the patient as fully conscious, note the removal of sutures, and indicate the wound as being "well healed". In clinical terms I was described thusly:

a). retained Fb in right hemisphere;
b). left hemiparesis; and
c). left hyperaesthesia.

In layman's language that meant:

a). piece of metal in head.
b). partial paralysis on left side of body;
c). lack of sensation over left side of body.

So while I was still confined to bed, it was apparent that my overall condition had generally stabilized and soon afterwards I began having physiotherapy treatment on my left hand and fingers.

Meanwhile the first of August became a reverse "red-letter" day for me because one of the nurses (I like to imagine it was "Medic Mo"'s physiotherapist wife Gwen) kindly offered to write a letter home on my behalf. Herewith the contents of the Air-Letter:

B. N. + R. A. Hospital.
Basingstoke.
Hants.

Sun: 1st 1944.

Dearest Mother.

How is everybody at home? Fine I trust. This is my first attempt at dictating a letter. - since I was injured. Everything is going fine + you will be glad to see that I am at Bobs old abode - which means under the careful observation of Col: Botterell + Major Stewart. They were both interested in all your work for Bob + said they would be glad to add a note to tell how I am. It is just a bad crack on the right side of my head - behind the ear - by a piece of shrapnel - as my memory is a little blank still - details are not many. But the thing is I am feeling much better + should be up + around in four weeks. In any case I'll be sure to let you know of any important change. After a little physio-therapy I'll be able to write to you myself. Please tell Peggie I have by no means forgotten her + all the same to the whole Capraike.

Cheerio for now. + all my love.

R.I.P.

P.S. Tell Bob many of his old friends are asking about him.

Bish is doing well & actually will be out in a few days. His left arm & leg are not working very well yet but we anticipate considerable improvement. His memory is vague only for events immediately before & after the injury, it is now again good. Please don't worry. Do give my regards to Bob Rowland. Harry Bolton

Fold Here

If anything is enclosed in this letter it will be sent by ordinary mail.

FROM:
(Sender's Regt'l No., Rank and Name only)
Lieut. E. G. Finley.

This Armed Forces Air Letter cannot be accepted for registration.

Fold Here

4 AUG 1944

Fold Here

Open Here

ARMED FORCES AIR LETTER

AIR MAIL

This letter must be posted in Armed Forces Postal channels. If posted in a Civil Post Office or pillar box, it will not be given air transmission.

TO: Lieut. E. Ross Finley.
3940. Ore-dent-Legion Apt.
Montreal.
Canada.

POSTAGE 3d REVENUE

Aug: 1st 1944 *B.N. & P.S. Hospital*
Basingstoke, Hants.

Dearest Mother,

How is everybody at home? Fine I trust. This is my first attempt at dictating a letter - since I was injured. Everything is going fine & you will be glad to see that I am at Bob's old abode - which means under the careful observation of Col. Botterell & Major Stewart. They were both interested in all your work for Bob & said they would be glad to add a note to tell how I am. It is just a bad crack on the right side of my head - behind the ear - by a piece of shrapnel - as my memory is a little blank still - details are not many. But the thing is I am feeling much better & should be up and around in four weeks. In any case I'll be sure to let you know of any important change. After a little physio-therapy I'll be able to write to you myself. Please tell Peggie I have by no means forgotten her - & the same to the Mate [&] Captain.

Cheerio for now & all my love.
Skip

P.S. Tell Bob many of his old friends are asking about him

On the back page, the following is handwritten by the chief neurosurgeon:

Skip is doing well & actually will be up in a few days. His left arm & leg are not working very well yet but we anticipate considerable improvement. His memory is vague only for events immediately before & after the injury, & is now again good. Please don't worry. Do give my regards to Bob Pentland. Harry Botterell
[signed]

Whether Mother received this letter before Bill Pentland's or whether either of them informed her for the first time about my injury, no conclusive evidence has as yet been found. She may possibly have learned about it initially from one of two other sources. Having been contacted by the hospital administration and subsequently assured by Dr. Botterell personally that it was not another case of "crying wolf" (see PORTHOLE #9), brother Hart managed to get leave from instructing Spitfire pilots in northern England and came down to be with me from August 4-6. During his stay he apparently communicated with Mother because the opening sentence in my Aug.21 Air Letter to

her states: "Just rec'd your letter of Aug 10th saying you'd had word from Hart when he visited me".

The second source was Lt.(n) Jack Macbeth, RCNVR, whom we have already met (see PORTHOLE #4). One of the two original Assistant Beachmasters in "W"-3, Jack injured his shoulder during training and reverted to General Service where he joined Canadian MTBs. One day in early August when his boat was moored alongside a temporary jetty off JUNO beaches, he chanced to spot an RCN Beach Commando "W" member who told him about my mishap and whereabouts. Accordingly, as a navigator specialist and true friend, Jack appeared by my bunkside on August 7. His visit featured a couple of highlights. It marked the very first occasion of getting out of bed to go to the "head", being supported en route by a walker on my starboard side and by Jack to port. It also provided Jack with an opportunity to counter my having nicknamed him "Spider" after witnessing him hanging helplessly from the branch of a tree above a deep ravine as we negotiated an obstacle course during our commando training six months previously. On entering Ward #20 and spotting my totally shaven head, Jack slowly sauntered towards me and impishly exclaimed: "Ubangi"! Ever afterwards for him, such would be my sobriquet. Meanwhile, with respect to the matter at hand, I presume that even if Jack did subsequently write to Mother, it would unlikely comprise her first knowledge of the original incident. Thus, and as it pertains to all of the other mentioned possibilities as well, no definite answer can yet be given to our question: when, how, and in what form did Mother first hear about my injury?

As the days passed and *physiotherapy treatments increased, my interests and activities slowly diversified. From being simply a large ward with every bed occupied and continuously serviced by white-clothed RCAMC personnel, the scene gradually revealed itself as a collection of individual patients and human beings.

From whatever day it was when I regained continuous full consciousness and certainly before brother Hart or Jack "Spider" Macbeth had paid me their visits as outsiders, I recall having brief but not infrequent words with Capt. Wynne Baldwin (a native of St. Thomas, Ontario), the bed-ridden patient next to me. Like mine, his head was "Ubangi"-style clean-shaven, but he also had both eyes bandaged. As a member of a Canadian regiment attacking Caen, Wynne lost the sight in his right eye and stood to lose the left also. We became instant buddies and, up until our separation on account of his repatriation in October, spent endless hours together. Because he fortunately retained sight in his left eye, playing cribbage was added to walking as our second main leisure-time preoccupation. Just before his train left for Liverpool where he would board a troopship bound for Halifax, Wynne called out to me: "Don't forget our fishing date when you get back home, Skipper!"

Two other Basingstoke patients remain etched in my memory. One was Major Connie Smythe (an MC winner during WW I) who had been wounded on July 25th after serving for a fortnight with the RCA in Normandy. Connie of course will always be remembered at least by Canadian hockey buffs for his long association with the Toronto

*In passing it is interesting to note the following remarks which I wrote in an August 8th letter home to my physiotherapist mother: "The physiotherapy nurses here are v. good..... I wish you were here to give me my treatments - but don't think they aren't good. 3 of them do 600 cases a day. Very understaffed."

Maple Leafs. My recollection of him at BNPS, I'm afraid to say, may not sit well with his admirers or supporters. On being admitted to the Basingstoke hospital, he apparently promptly demanded and got a private room. Thereafter, besides continually complaining about poor service, he constantly gave unreasonable orders to the already over-worked staff. In fairness, perhaps, the foregoing "charges" should be tempered by making due allowance for the possibility that at the time the not-so-young major may quite possibly and simply have represented a typical case of "battle fatigue".

The second patient was a Canadian Army lieutenant whose name I have forgotten. He had received multiple shrapnel wounds in the Italian campaign and, having recovered sufficiently, was about to be discharged a couple of weeks after my arrival at BNPS. I recall that his wife, who had a military job in London and looked after their year-old son, used to visit her husband regularly. In coming to know the lieutenant better, I realized that the situation facing him and his wife was particularly poignant -- especially as of the day when not only was he scheduled for discharge from hospital but also did he receive notice to report forthwith to his unit. I often wonder how that family threesome subsequently fared.

Returning for the moment to a consideration of my physical condition at the time, it may be noted that as a result of appearing before a Medical Board on August 4, I was given the following PROVISIONAL PULHEMS GRADING:

Year of Birth	P	U	L	H	E	M	S
1923	5	5	5	1	1	1	1

The seven factors in the PULHEMS Profile reveal the physical, mental, and emotional capabilities of the individual as follows:

P -- Physique -- This includes general development, capacity to acquire physical stamina with training. It is the individual's capacity for work. Under P is also included the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, and neurological (organic) systems.
U -- Upper Extremity -- Functional use of hands, arms, shoulder girdle, and upper spine.
L -- Lower Extremity -- Functional use of feet, legs, pelvis, and lower spine.
H -- Ears and hearing.
E -- Eyes and eyesight.
M -- Mental capacity -- Intelligence.
S -- Stability -- Emotional.

There are five grades under each factor, each grade being indicated by a figure, so that grades 1 to 5 embody the whole range of functional fitness.*

By the Canadian Army's Routine Order 3666, effective 1 October 1943, the PULHEMS Profile superseded the Category system which used letters -- "A", "B",....to "F"). With minor modifications other branches of Canada's Armed Forces as well as other Allied countries subsequently adopted the same system.**

Meanwhile during the first two weeks of August an interesting and informative exchange of correspondence was taking place between Dick Johnstone, our Beach Commando C.O. in Normandy and Saurin Brooke, CNMO's Staff Officer (Combined

*W.R. Feasby, Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939-1945. Ottawa: Queen's Printer. Vol.Two, 1956, p.417.

**Ibid., Vol.One, pp. 502 & 503.

Operations) in London. In his Aug.7 letter to Saurin, Dick enquired as to what hospital I had been finally taken. Having received Dick's letter four days later, Saurin's Aug.14 reply states in part:

> *Dear Johnstone, Very many thanks for your note, which was the first we had heard from "W" aside from the casualty report on Finley. The latter is at Basingstoke Neurological and Plastic Surgery Hospital, according to the latest reports. Charlie Bond* was in there with him for a while and said that Finley, still paralyzed down one side and suffering from severe headaches, seemed reasonably cheerful. Finley was of the opinion that the paralysis was only temporary.*

That my condition was gradually improving is indicated by these handwritten Aug.8 remarks to Mother:

> *This is my first attempt at a letter. Feeling much better, & Col. Botterrell [sic] says I've astounded all the medical men here with my progress. Spent all yesterday (about 1½ hours) in a wheel chair so I'm really coming along. It was great having Hartland with me for a few days. Very surprised to have Jack Macbeth visit me yesterday. He's on an M.T.B. & ran into some of our unit in France - ran into some bad shelling a few days ago..... Rough luck.*
>
> *My left arm is coming on fine, & the left leg has begun to move. Why I'll be walking in no time..... The old memory is still pretty hazy but it'll come back too. Did you know that all of the stitches are out of my head now, & looks like a good job - when my hair grows back I doubt if the scar will show..... Please don't worry because I feel like a draft dodger beside some of these fellows who are in grim shape.*

August 12 must have been a particularly happy day for me because it brought the very first communications from the home front since my Normandy injury three weeks previously. Both communications consisted of cables. One, signed "STEWART", was obviously from my "supposed" girl-friend (whom we have already met -- see p.39) and would have been quite welcomed. The other, signed "PEG FINLEY", while probably even

*Lt. C.R. Bond, RCNVR, was C.O. of LCI(L) 118 in the 2nd Canadian Flotilla. He was wounded during the June 1944 Normandy landings.

more welcome, caused me not a little concern on first reading.

Concern centered on the fact that while Peggy Muir was my No.1 girl-friend back home in Canada at the time -- indeed we were all but officially engaged -- I wondered why she had signed her name as PEG FINLEY on the cable. The whole affair soon resolved itself, as my Aug.13 letter to my aunt, Mrs. G.W. Birks, explains:

> *Can't tell you how glad I was to receive your cable yesterday. The first copy I got was signed "PEG FINLEY". Needless to say I was a little startled, not knowing whether I had married her by proxy during my unconsciousness or what. However the original copy "PEG / FINLEYS / BIRKS" solved the mystery.*

On Aug.15 I was discharged from BNPS Hospital and sent by stretcher in an ambulance to #23 Canadian General Hospital at Leavesden, near Watford, at the north end of the London "tube" system. Lt.Col. Botterell's medical notes state:

> 14 Aug.44. Patient is up & about & conscious, alert & cooperative. X-Rays show intra-cranial gas to have disappeared. Has retained M.F.B.. Has residual left hemi-paresis with sensory deficit of cortical type most marked in leg. No facial weakness but medium grasp nystagmus to left persists.
> 23/7/44. S.W. H.E. E.A. Rt. temporal region - with lac of brain & retained M.F.B.. Primary union and still recovering from hemiplegia with sensory deficit of cortical type. For transfer to Watford Gen. Hosp.

Under "Recommendation" on Hospital Discharge Notification dated 15 Aug., Major W.L. Boulter, Registrar, states:

> BOARDED: Category "D" - PULHEMS: P.5, U.5, L.5 -STRETCHER-
> TRANSFERRED TO: #23 C.G.H.

The move to Ward #32 in the Leavesden hospital prompted the following comments in my letter to Mother next day:

Simply had to write you this aft as I was up walking for the first time. Really feels great, & tho' the boys say it's a mixture between a rhumba & a new shuffle all of my own, it'll soon be as good as ever. All I have to do now is get rid of my paralysis (that is no feeling, altho' my leg & arm are strong) on my left side, grow a little hair, & I'll have a hard time convincing people I was ever hurt.
We left Basingstoke yesterday & am now not far from London just waiting to come home - probably less than 8 weeks. Rec'd two letters from you, 2 from Peg., & one from the Mate [Mrs. Birks] just before we left, the first I'd had, & it really was great. All the doctors & nurses were absolutely thrilled to hear about Bob [Pentland] in his wheel chair & all send their v best.....Just a matter now of resting the old beano as headaches are numerous & come easy, & then the trip home.

If today's memory serves me correctly, after being about a week at Leavesden Hospital I was reassigned to a bed in the ground-level, "out-door" extension of our Ward #32. The need to construct and use such temporary extensions was doubtlessly due do the ever-increasing number of Canadian war casualties coming from the European theatres at the time. As I recall, the extension had a curved sheet-metal roof (similar to that of the nissen hut) and retractable, heavy-duty canvas sidings. Since beds in this area were assigned only to ambulatory patients who could make their own beds and generally look after themselves, being transferred indicated that my walking ability had improved.

During the remainder of August, my routine included regular physiotherapy sessions, daily walks and cribbage games with Wynne Baldwin, and letter-writing. With respect to the latter, I frequently mentioned two particular factors in letters home -- one, that my memory was almost non-existent; and two, that there wasn't much improvement in the feeling on my left side. All the while I received several letters and parcels from both family and friends, for which I was always most appreciative.

Meanwhile, Jack "Spider" Macbeth arrived unexpectedly one day to inform me that RCN Beach Commando had returned to Cowes from Normandy on August 23 and disbanded a week later. It was good news to learn that they suffered no further serious casualties in their seven-week stint on JUNO sector beaches.

The next formal assessment of my condition occurred at Leavesden Hospital on Aug. 28. On a four-page, nineteen-section "Medical History of an Invalid" form, the following statements appear under the noted sections:

#4. Personal description: (a) Height 6' 0" (b) (i) Weight on enlistment, stripped:– 155
(ii) Present weight, stripped:– 145

#8. Present Condition
(a) Subjective (in the individual's own words) I have no sense of feeling on my left side. I have difficulty in walking correctly. I am unable to fully open my mouth. I have headaches pretty well all day.

(b) History of present disability. ...F.B. still evident. Has residual left hemiparesis with sensory deficit of cortical type - nystagmus to left persists.....Awaiting repatriation.

Section #9, which is undated, gives Capt. J.A. Ritchie's initials as those of the examining officer and my signature as having heard the contents of Sections 8(a) and (b) read and being satisfied with them.

#10. Present condition.
Extremities - right upper and lower normal. Left shows hemiparesis (see specialist's report) with exaggerated reflexes. No appreciable atrophy but joint sense and space appreciation absent. Sensory loss gone upper and lower extremities.

P-5; U-1; L-1; H-1; E-1; M-1; S-1.
[N.B. These "U", L", & "E" gradings are different from those given by Capt. Ritchie above].

#11. Were the diseases or injuries caused or aggravated:
(a) By intemperance or improper conduct No
(b) By unreasonable refusal to accept treatment No

#12. What is the probable future duration of the disease or injuries?
Indefinite

#13. Is further treatment in hospital, convalescent home, etc, likely to be of material benefit?
(If the answer is "yes" state nature of treatment required and probable duration.)
Yes. Further convalescence essential. Should be repatriated.

#14. Can the former civilian trade, profession of occupation be resumed?
(If not, briefly state why)
No - existing hemi-pareisis

#15. Recommendations
That he be brought before medical board for assessment of rating.

At this point (bottom of third page) the form is dated 28 Aug 44 and signed by J.A. Ritchie, Capt., RCAMC as "Medical Officer by whom the case is brought forward".

#16. (a) Does the Board concur with the preceding report?
If not give differing opinions with reasons.
we concur

(c) Category or Profile. P-5; U-1; L-1; H-1; E-1; M-1; S-1

#17. Recommendation of Medical Board:
(a) Does require treatment (give the nature of treatment or convalescence required and probable duration)
Requires long convalescence for this head injury

(b) Does not require treatment. Walking

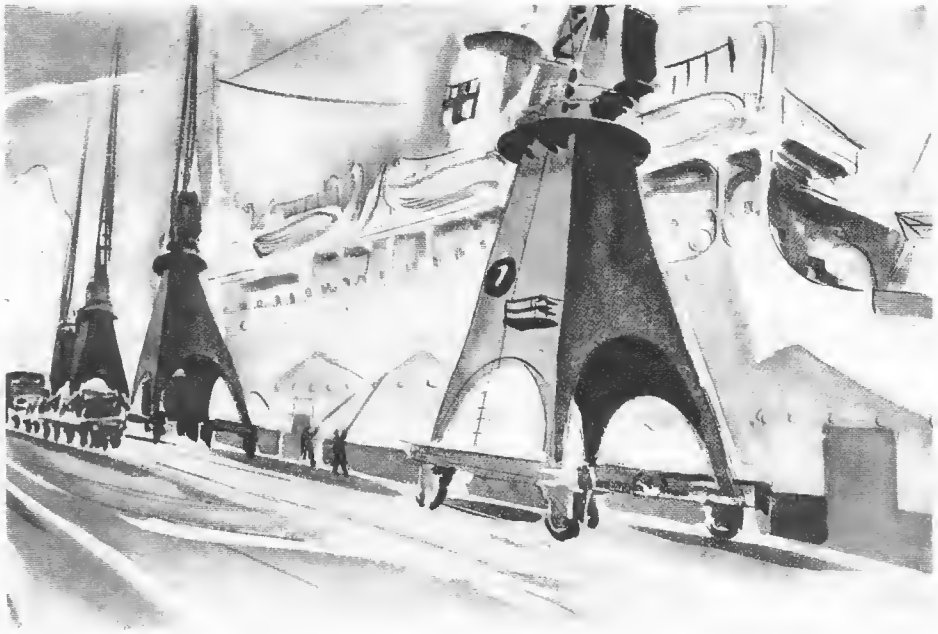
M.B. Perrin, Lt.-Col. RCAMC, President
T.S. Perrett, Major } RCAMC Members
S.K. Mager, Major }

Place Leavesden Military Hospital
Date 31 Aug 44

As a consequence, on Aug.28 form MFB227 for my repatriation was also completed and supposedly forwarded to CNMO for action. With the prospect of soon sailing back to Canada and having bidden farewell to my walking and cribbage partner Wynne, who had just received orders to board a Canada-bound, HM Troopship in Liverpool, I myself must have been on a "high" that day. Playing the averages and with any luck, my draft should occur within a few weeks -- certainly by the beginning of October.

But alas! Such was not to be the case. By mid-September three troopers, all carrying large numbers of Canadian war casualties, had made the UK-Halifax crossing and I began to despair of ever being selected as a passenger. Around this time I paid my first visit to CNMO in London since being wounded for the purpose (as I wrote in a Sep.8 letter to Mother) of giving "the naval authorities hell for not notifying you" of my injury. The next sentence reads: "I'd hate like ---- to think they've not notified the [next-of-kin of] others".

The torpedo that almost sank the ship struck shortly after when, while chatting informally with a CNMO staff member in the London office on Sep.18, it was discovered that none of my repatriation papers could be found anywhere. In the following four weeks, as the search for the "missing" documents proceeded, two new developments occurred. First -- on Sep. 19 I transferred from #23 CGH at Leavesden to No.1 N.E.T.D. (Non-Effective Transit Depot) at Thursley in Surrey. Administered by the Lorne Scots and known as Tweedsmuir Camp, this Depot provided minimal-medical accommodation mainly for Canadian military personnel awaiting repatriation. Second -- on Oct.2 I



Canadian Hospital Ship "Lady Nelson"
berthed at Avonmouth, England
Nov. 14, 1943

One of Mother's several subsequent Testimonials

CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Physiotherapy Department,
Queen Mary Veterans Hospital,
Montreal, P.Q.
10th March 1953.

IN YOUR REPLY REFER TO FILE NO

Mrs. N. Ross Finley,
Charge Physiotherapist,
Physiotherapy Department,
St. Annes Military Hospital,
St. Anne de Bellevue, P.Q.

Dear Mrs. Finley,

It is with great regret that we accept your resignation, but fully appreciate your wish to do so.

On behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs may I thank you for your selfless devotion to the profession of Physiotherapy both during the War Years when you established the Department at St. Annes and during the past three years when you returned to help and stayed to steer the same Department through many difficulties. Our appreciation of what you have achieved for the Patients as well as the Staff cannot be adequately expressed.

Our best wishes are extended to you for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Gwen Gower-Rees.

G. GOWER-REES, M.C.S.P., C.P.A.,
Advisor in Physiotherapy.

GGR/mf

P.S. Just a personal "thank you"
love Gwen.

DVA 1 15-5-52

received word to the effect that, since the Canadian Government could not take responsibility for my travelling by regular troopship, I would have to make the trans-Atlantic sea-voyage on either "Lady Nelson" or "Letitia", Canada's two hospital ships.

In order to reactivate my repatriation process, CNMO informed me in mid-October that I would have to return to Basingstoke and appear before another (my third!) medical board. According to my letters home around this time, while obviously miffed about the inconvenience, I nevertheless welcomed the opportunity of being able to personally thank all the doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and staff who had treated me so well and so successfully between July 26 and August 15. In return many of the medical personnel asked me to convey to Mother their high praise for all the wonderful work being done for Canadian war casualties by her Physiotherapy Department at the Ste. Anne de Bellevue military hospital near Montreal.

Utilizing the same format as previously (see p.61), the following comprise the relevant statements which appear in selected sections of my "Medical History of an Invalid" form which was completed at Basingstoke between Oct. 19 and 26.

#4. Personal description: (a) Height 6' 0" (b) (i) Weight on enlistment, stripped:– 155
(ii) Present weight, stripped:– 145

#8. Present Condition
(a) Subjective (in the individual's own words) 'I walk with a limp in my left leg. The feeling in my left leg and arm is not normal. The strength in my left arm is not as good as formerly. I occasionally have a peculiar feeling of pressure in my right ear. I cannot open my mouth to the same extent as before the injury.'

(b) History of present disability
23 July 44- SW(HE)EA-88 mm-France-Penetrating wound rt. temporal with left hemiparesis-unconscious-Retrograde amnesia momentary, post traumatic amnesia 3 days with islands of memory 'during the amnesic period'. Operated same day 6 MNSU. Debridement of wound, removal indriven bone and pulped brain. Metallic foreign body not removed. 26 Judy 44. Admitted BN & PS Hosp. Drain in wound removed. X-ray shows small collection of gas intracranially. Moves left arm & leg, though obviously weak. No other abnormal neurological findings, save for sensory deficit of cortical type most involved in left leg.

Section #9, dated 19 Oct.44., gives Capt. L.L. Bernstein's initials as those of the examining officer and my signature as having heard the contents of Sections 8(a) and (b) read and being satisfied with them.

#10. Present condition... Young officer, intelligent, good type. Head & neck - rt. temporal, wound well healed, not tender; cranial defect about 2 cm. diameter palpable-not tense or bulging. Pupils equal, react to light, fundi normal, remainder cranial nerves intact (save for hypaesthesia left side face).
Extremities:- Has a left hemiparesis which is worse in leg than arm, though there is good power in each, but subnormal. Left extremities feel colder and sweatier than right. Deep reflexes active bilaterally, but increased on left side. No clonus present. Abdominal present both sides, but diminished on left. Plantar stimulation left side produces no response. On right is definitely flexor sensory. There is hypaesthesia on the whole of the left side of the body including the face.

P-5; U-5; L-5; H-1; E-1; M-1; S-1. Naval Category 'D'.

[N.B. The "5" gradings for "U" & "L" replace the "1" gradings given on Aug.28 by the previous Medical Board.]

Sections #11 and #12 have identical comments to those made in the Aug.28 report (see pp.61-62 above). After an answer of "yes" is given to Section #13's question, the nature of treatment required is described as "Physiotherapy and neurological supervision". "Uncertain" is the answer made to Section #14's question as to whether the invalid's

former civilian occupation can be resumed. Finally, under Section #15, entitled "Recommendations", we read: "Refer to Medical Board". At this point (bottom of third page) the form is dated 19 Oct.44. and signed by L.L. Bernstein, Capt., RCAMC, as "Medical officer by whom the case is brought forward".

On page four of the form, we find the following sections and their comments:

#16. (a) Does the Board concur with the preceding report?
If not give differing opinions with reasons

We concur

(b) Final Diagnosis with Code No.

Same 4001, 4050

(c) Category or Profile. Berth

YOB	P	U	L	H	E	M	S
23	5	5	5	1	1	1	1

Naval Category 'D'

#17. Recommendation of Medical Board:

Physiotherapy and neurological supervision

E.H. Botterell, Lt Col. RCAMC, President.
O.W. Stewart, Major RCAMC } Members.
L.L. Bernstein, Capt. RCAMC }

Place Basingstoke,Hants
Date 20 Oct 44

#18. TO BE COMPLETED WHEN TREATMENT IS REFUSED
[N.B. This section is blank]

#19. APPROVED BY

CONFIRMED BY
(when indicated)

R.M.Luton
Major General
Director of Medical Services
Canadian Military Headquarters

Date OCT 26 1944

The Ottawa Citizen, June 12, 1969

How London escaped buzz-bombs

By John LeBlanc

LONDON (CP) — Shortly before dawn on June 13, 1944, a small machine looking like a toy airplane sped over the Kent coastline from the Channel.

It spat flame and gave off a rhythmic throbbing noise that was to rasp the nerves of war-weary Londoners for the next nine months. For it also carried a ton of random death.

When a Royal Observer Corps watcher spotted it 25 years ago and shouted the code word "Diver" into his telephone, he signalled the arrival of Hitler's Vengeance Weapon No. 1. The V-1 was one of the Fuehrer's last despairing throws of the dice to halt the Allies who had just landed in Normandy.

Britons more informally called it the doodlebug or the buzz-bomb. It was to kill 6,138 of them—mostly civilians — and seriously injure 17,239 before invasion forces crowded in on launching places in France, Belgium and The Netherlands.

Too late

It caused some loss of worker efficiency and production from snapping nerves and the diversion of perhaps 100,000 tons of bombs from other Nazi targets to launching and production installations. But it was too late and too little.

The flying bomb developed in secret was a monoplane with a wing span of 16 feet and an over-all length of 25 feet. Launched from a ramp—later from planes as land sites grew scarcer — it was powered by a simple jet engine and had a top speed of about 280 miles an hour and a range that went up to 250 miles in its later stages.

A magnetic compass actuated an automatic pilot to keep it flying straight. When a windmill in the nose had made a pre-set number of revolutions, a mechanism shut off the engine and sent it into a dive sideways.

Kent on edge

It was this characteristic that kept Londoners on edge during the era of the doodlebug.

Listeners could hear its distinctive pulsating buzz for miles and would hold their breaths until it passed overhead. If the droning stopped suddenly, everyone in earshot dived for shelter.

As a rough rule, the aiming point of the bombs was Tower Bridge about two miles down the Thames from the Houses of Parliament. But there was such a margin of error that the doodlebugs fell like scattershot. The first one, for instance, dropped 20 miles short of target.

The most damage, in fact, was concentrated in Penge, a quiet suburb seven miles south of the bridge where every one of the 6,000 old houses was either damaged or destroyed and one in every 20 persons was either killed or injured.

Since 1942 London and Washington had been receiving reports from inside Nazi territory about the development of pilotless bomb-carrying aircraft and the rocket missiles that were to materialize later as the V-2.

In 1943 an experimental V-1 fell in Denmark and, before the Germans arrived to snatch it up, a Dane sketched it and got the picture through to the British.

About the same time, a French Resistance member named Michel Hollard, posing as a Hugenot church welfare worker handing out tracts to French conscripts working on a mysterious project in the Pas de Calais, got details of 100 launching sites pointed at London and smuggled them to the British embassy in neutral Switzerland.

Saved London

The Allies plastered them with bombs and after the war Lt.-Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks, a distinguished commander and post-war military historian, saluted Hollard as "the man who literally saved London."

But thousands played a part in damping down the effects of the V-1. Anonymous office workers interpreting air reconnaissance photographs had a key role.

Meanwhile, information kept coming in about hundreds of installations that looked like up-ended skis—they were launching ramps —growing up along the Nazi-held Channel coast. The Allies kept bombing them until by the end of 1943 most had been hit.

Modified sites

But the Germans kept rebuilding them with the help of expendable conscript labor until, by the time of the first onslaught, 68 modified and less-vulnerable installations had been located.

By this time, too, a game of spy and counter-spy was well under way.

In England, information that the V-1 was to be the next weapon was so solid that defences of barrage balloons, anti-aircraft guns and fighter-plane protection had been lined up in the paths of the missiles toward London.

Across the Channel, Col. Max Wachtel of Flag Regiment 155W, the man in charge of the whole program of firing the buzz-bombs, knew that counter-intelligence was at work and went to comic-opera lengths to circumvent it.

Convinced that British agents were out to kill him, he changed his name, grew a beard, and got permission to wear any German uniform he chose. Once he changed his headquarters with such elaborate secrecy that it lost touch with its laundry and the personnel went for weeks without clean clothes.

After the flying-bomb offensive opened, British authorities set their minds to trying to fool the enemy into diverting the weapons from the thickly populated London area.

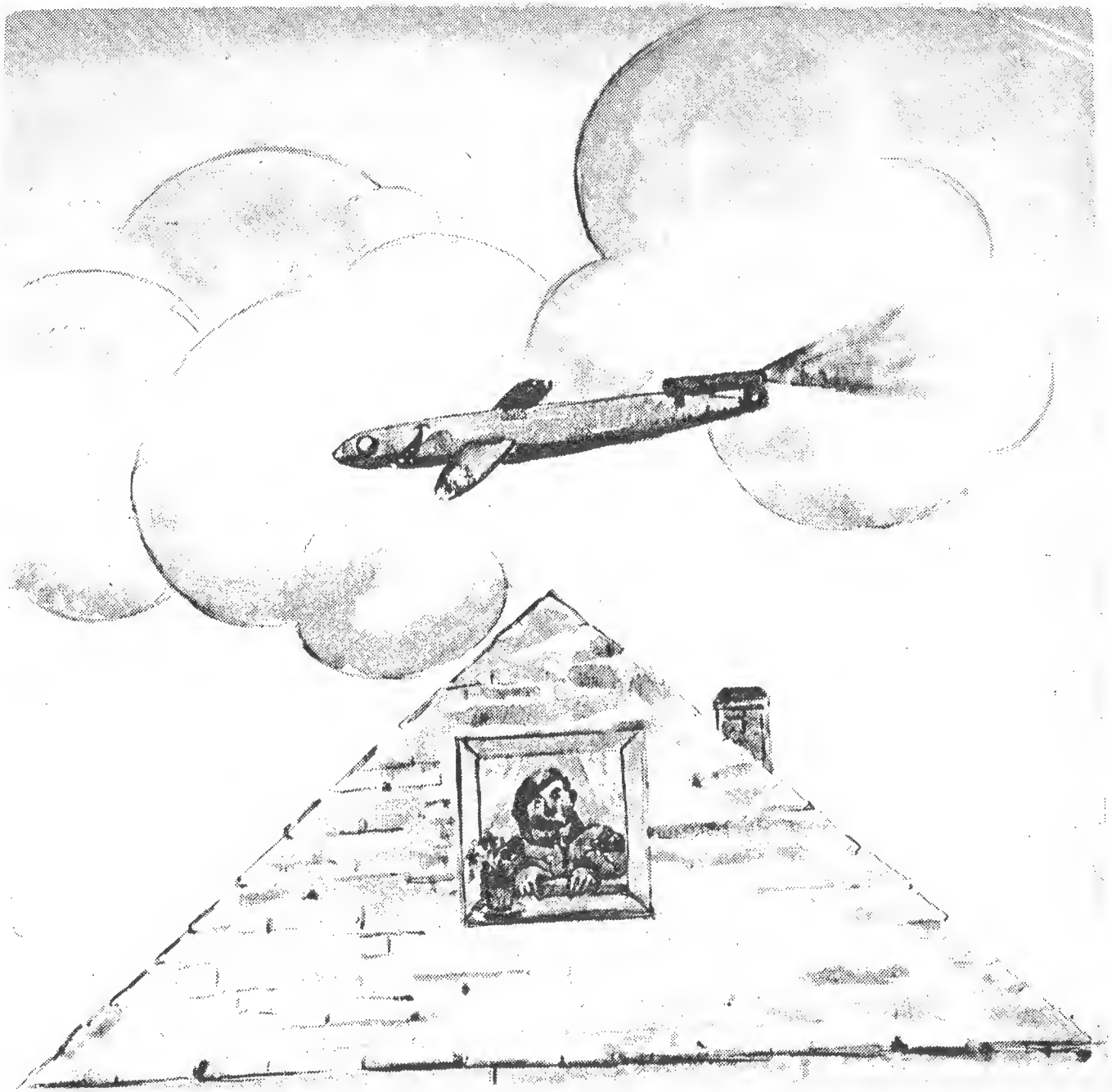
A proposal went before the cabinet for leaking out misdirection, by means of a flood of false death notices in London newspapers, to suggest that the buzz-bombs were overshooting London in the hope that they would be adjusted to fall short in the countryside.

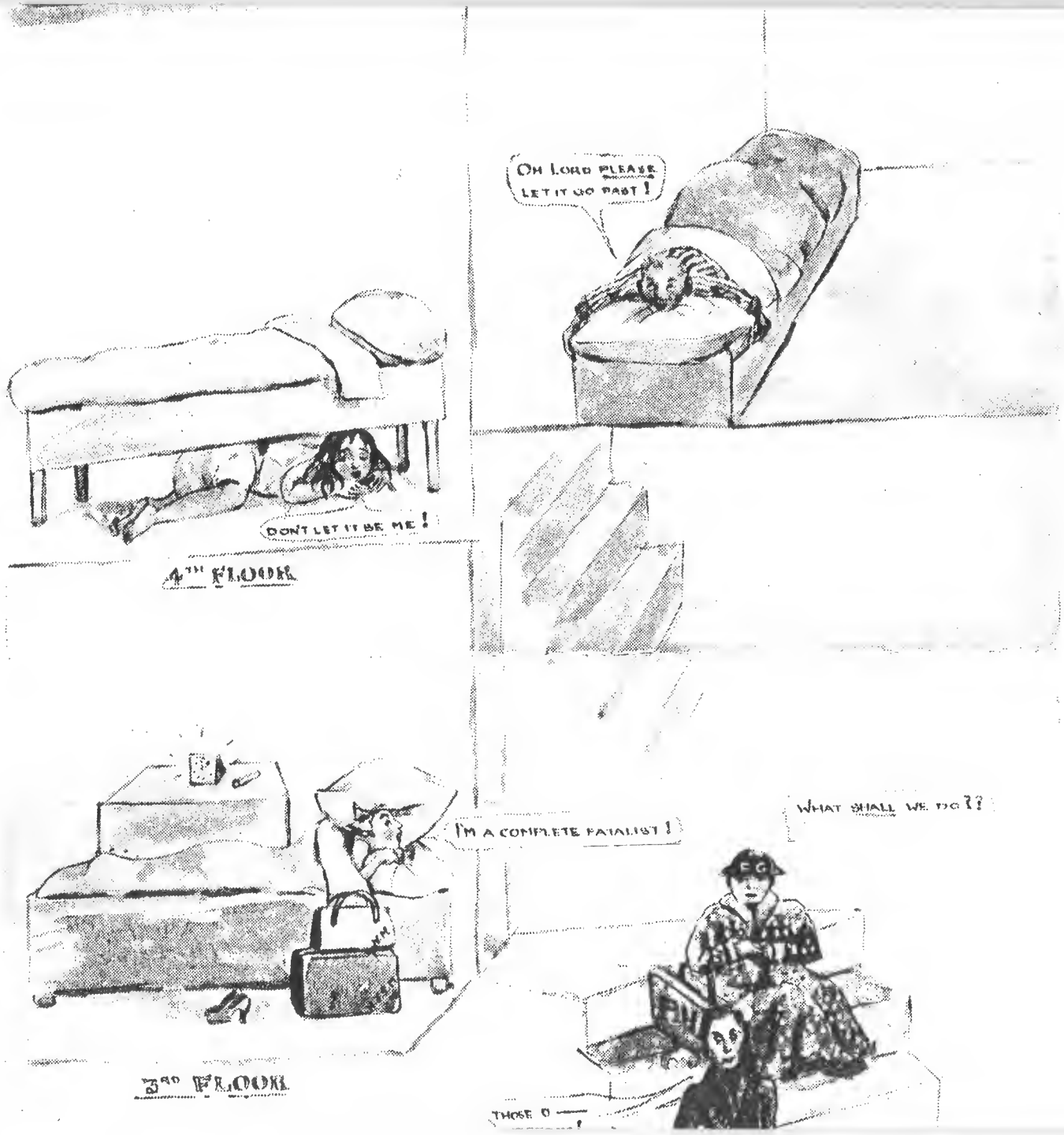
But the idea of possibly killing some people outside London to save a larger number of lives in the capital precipitated an anguished moral crisis among the ministers.

"Who are we to act as God?" cried Herbert Morrison, the minister of home security.

The cruel decision was taken out of the cabinet's hands when the buzz-bombs started falling short in large numbers.

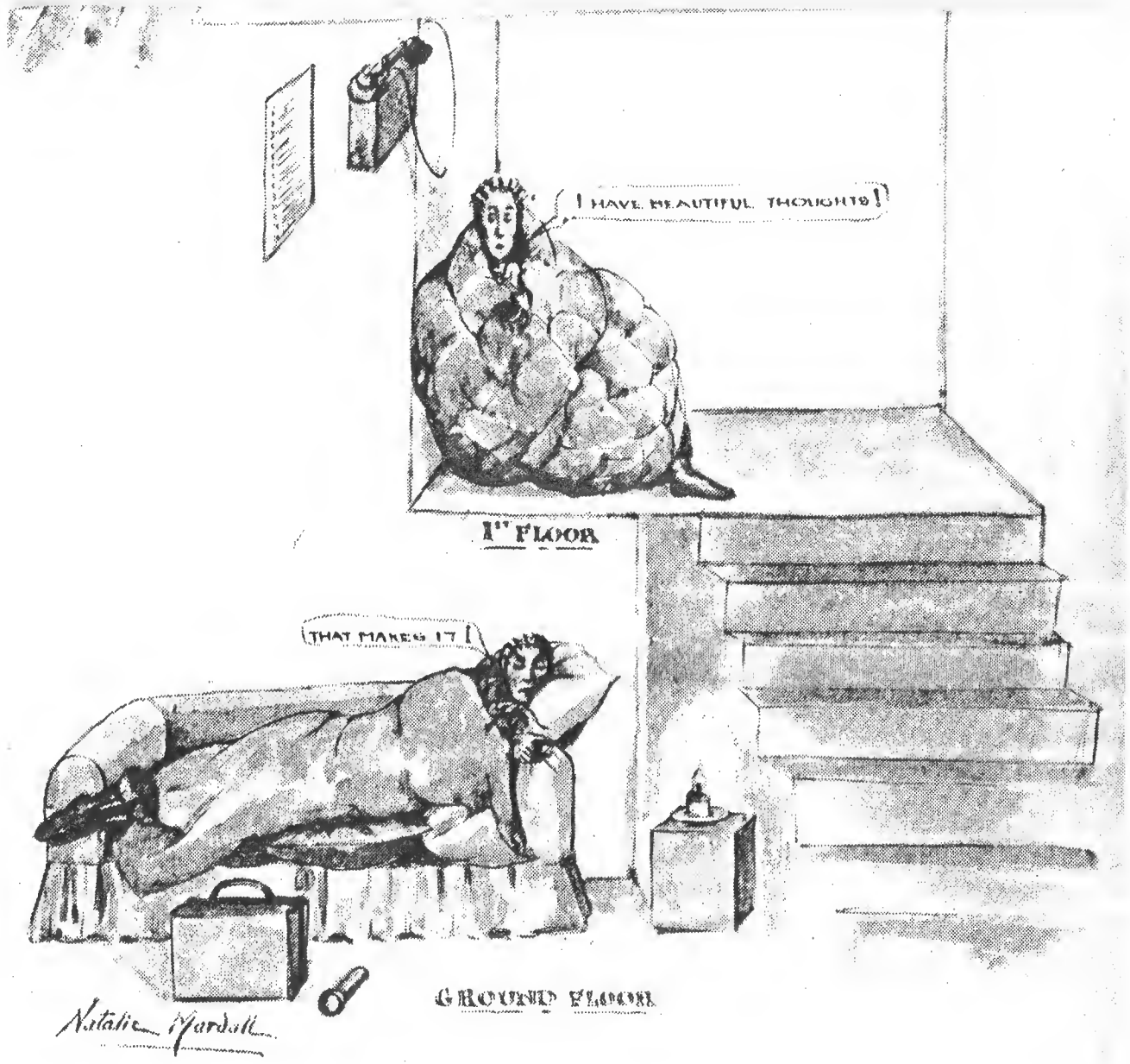
What came out only much later was that the wily Col. Wachtel thought he had an agent planted in the ministry of information to report results. Counter-intelligence obligingly provided reports persuading the colonel to shorten the range.




OH LORD PLEASE LET IT GO PAST !
DONT LET IT BE ME !
4TH FLOOR
I'M A COMPLETE FATALIST !
WHAT SHALL WE DO ??
3RD FLOOR
THOSE O



Night Life
at
No 126.


I HAVE BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS!
1ST FLOOR
THAT MAKES 17!
GROUND FLOOR
Natalie Nardell

So now it became simply a matter of putting in time waiting for the day when my name would appear on the passenger list for either of Canada's two main hospital ships. While letter-writing constantly consumed many an hour (and, incidentally, also proved subsequently to comprise an invaluable historical record), I spent several days visiting people and places around or near London. The only quasi-official restriction placed upon my peregrinations was the requirement of keeping in close touch with N.E.T.D. at Thursley to find out if my draft had arrived.

One particularly memorable occasion was the day I flew as a passenger in a four-engine Halifax III bomber pilotted by Frank Harris (an RCAF flight-lieutenant) on a 600-mile flight along the south coast of England. Another enjoyable event took place on Oct.5 when Hart and I spent the whole evening at London's Queensbury Club where hundreds had gathered to see, hear, and dance to Glenn Miller's popular swing band. Less than three months later, unfortunately, while en route to Paris to put on a series of Christmas concerts for Allied service personnel, forty-year-young Glenn, leader of the American Band of the A.E.F., was killed when his plane apparently crashed into the ocean. A third pleasant memory recalls watching two RCAF war artists -- Carl Schaeffer and Bob Hyndman -- at work around mid-October in their Lincoln's Inn Fields, London studio. Carl, with the nickname of "Uncle Wiggly", had been a much maligned and under-appreciated art teacher at my pre-war secondary school. Bob, if I remember correctly, was actually on rest leave at the time from his fighter squadron.

On the roof of RCAF Headquarters
20 Lincoln's Inn Fields
Holborn, London
Oct. 14, 1944



Skip and, at right,
RCAF war artist F/L C.F. Schaefer



The older Finley brothers and, at right,
RCAF war artist F/L R.S. Hyndman

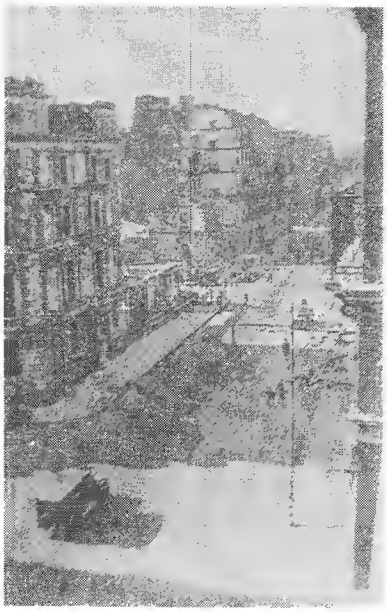


Getting dressed
(note "long johns"!)

Hart snaps Skip
in
Norfolk Hotel
South Kensington
London
Oct. 12, 1944



On third-floor balcony



Taken from our hotel-room window, this snapshot shows
damage caused by a German V-1 "BUZZ BOMB"
(also called "DOODLEBUG")
which exploded upon landing just hours before we registered,
Oct. 10, 1944

In the early years of World War II when the Germans were carrying out massive and unrelenting air raids on London, the British Government implemented an extensive program of evacuating young children particularly. As part of this program, many children went to live with Canadian families. The G.W. Birks family of Montreal, with whom I myself had lived since 1932, took care of three twelve-year-old boys -- John Gray, Philip Banister, and Nigel Chapman -- all of whom came from the Greater London area. While awaiting repatriation, I managed to meet and visit with their respective mothers and fathers, and must acknowledge the warm and generous manner in which each of the three pairs of parents always treated me.

Before continuing on to describe the subsequent medical and repatriation details which will bring this "PORTHOLE" to its logical conclusion, a not insignificant topic begs for centre-stage attention. Sub-titled "All the nice girls love a sailor", there follows herewith a condensed account of my "love life" during the year-long period under consideration. Looking back from today's 1994 perspective, I recall all my male/female (and male/male) relationships, from earliest boyhood onwards, as always having been quite natural and normal. The mini-portholes set forth below provide brief sketches of my perception of the interrelations which I experienced between 1943 and 1944 with the five young ladies whom, at various times, I considered to be my Number 1 girlfriend.



Mr. & Mrs. G.W. Birks, their family,
Cocker Spaniel pooch, "Taffy of Monk Bretton",
and, at right,
the three boys evacuated from England
(top to bottom): John, Nigel, Philip
Montreal 1940

Ship Ahoy!

Written by
A. J. MILLS.

All the nice Girls love a Sailor.

Composed by
BENNETT SCOTT.



1. Elizabeth Stewart. A cute and popular young Montrealer, Betty was dated regularly throughout World War II by servicemen and civilians alike. For several months after his 1942 arrival in Britain for fighter-pilot training, my brother Hartland continued to claim Betty as his #1, as did I for awhile in 1943. And she doubtlessly had many other suitors as well. (In passing, it might be suggested that generally speaking the single serviceman wanted to have a girlfriend back home, of whom he had a picture, with whom he carried on reciprocal correspondence, and about whom he could brag to his chums.) While "greener pastures" subsequently lured all three of us, I must admit that several future occasions arose when, with more than mere nostalgia, I recalled how, as our lips neared, Betty would always whisper "only a hair's breadth" just before we consummated a full osculatory embrace. The cable she sent to me after hearing of my injury was most likely a simple friendship gesture (prompted by my having written at length to her several months earlier when her only brother Donnie, a pilot in the RCAF and a good friend of mine, had been killed in action) because she evidently thought that I was engaged at the time to Peggy Muir (see mini-porthole #5 below).

2. Alexandrina Grant Nicholson. Petite and possessed of boundless energy, "Sexy little Lexie", as RCN Beach Commando "W" affectionately dubbed her, served in the WRNS at our HMS Armadillo training base at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Scotland throughout the winter of 1943-44. Being the natural leader of an RN "Wren" quartette (Bambi, Blondie and Mary McDade comprising the other three) who delighted in waking us daily into the 6 a.m. darkness, her Glaswegian accent amused us all generally and her charming personality won my attention particularly. After having her as a partner

MISS EDGAR'S AND MISS CRAMP'S SCHOOL
Westmount, P.Q.

BETTY STEWART

"Unthinking, idle, wild and young,
She laughed and danced and talked and sung."

"Bette" has endeared herself to us all by her helpful nature and cheerful smile. Energetic in her ways, she has given much of her time to the Junior Red Cross as Vice-President. She excels in all sports, especially in skating and skiing and has proved herself to be a valuable member of the Ski-Team for the last four years. Betty has been with us ten years and throughout that time she has always been kind and thoughtful.

Activities: Capt. 2nd. Basketball Team '39-'40, '40-'41; Editorial Board of the "Beaver Log", '40-'41; Vice-President of Red Cross '40-'41; Ski-Team, '38-'39, '39-'40, '40-'41, '41-'42.



"THE BEAVER LOG"
School Yearbook, 1941-1942

HMS ARMADILLO, Winter 1943-44



RN Wren "Bambi" escorted by Ken Crowhurst (left), Don Sutherland (right) and Jack Macbeth

(and teacher) on several occasions, I can vouch that never again did I ever enjoy Scottish dancing as much. When the day came for our unit to leave Ardentinny, Lexie's parting words to me sounded like: "Farewell, ye cheeky boonder!"

3. Barbara Crossley. Shortly after RCN Beach Commando "W" moved south in mid-February from HMS Armadillo in Scotland to HMS Mastodon at Exbury in the New Forest, I met Billie at a dance in nearby Beaulieu where she worked as a "Wren" in the local naval establishment. Participating in virtually no Combined Operations training exercises during our entire six-week stay in HMS Mastodon, we consequently had much time off. Letters home for this period indicate that Billie and I spent many an enjoyable hour together; and the following diary entry even includes a touch of humour: "Feb. 29- marvellous dance at Lepe House. Fell hard for Billie....." (The moral of which is obviously to "look before you leap!"). In order to snip our budding romance, or at least to confine it to a "puppy love" stage, I finally informed Billie just before "W" Beach Commando moved to Hove that my #1 girlfriend (see mini-porthole #5 below), to whom I was all but officially engaged, had promised to wait for my return to Canada. The last contact I had with Billie during the war occurred in London the following October, a month prior to my repatriation, when she told me of being engaged to an Ensign in the US Navy and I in turn revealed to her that my previous #1 girlfriend had recently married someone else.

HMS MASTODON, March 1944



Billie being
beach-trained
near
Exbury, Hants



by Hart

by Skip

4. Cecilia Banister Irvine. Sister of Philip Banister, one of the three English boys who left England early in the war to live with the G.W. Birks family in Montreal, Cecilia was working as a Leading "Wren" with the Admiralty in London when we first met in September 1944. I had been unable to attend her wedding the previous December, five months after which her RN Lieutenant husband Nigel Irvine accidentally drowned in Ceylon. While waiting to return to Canada I frequently stayed at the Banister's Stoke Poges home, and so came to know their widowed daughter quite well. Writing to the Birks after one particular weekend visit, I refer to Cecilia as being "very very attractive, much like Philip, blonde hair tho' ". More than once when on leave in London, I accompanied her and her RN father (Captain Gerald C. Banister, Director, Boom Defence Department, Admiralty) for lunch. Then one day in November, after having earlier accepted her personal invitation to escort her to a gala December dinner party and dance, I had to advise her of my forthcoming November repatriation sailing date. As we parted for the final time, we laughingly chanted in unison the closing words of that old-time naval ditty, "All the nice girls love a sailor": "THEN IT'S OFF TO SEA AGAIN, SHIP AHOY, SAILOR BOY".

5. Margaret Janet Muir. I first met Peggie, the only daughter of a long-time friend of Mother's whom we all knew as "Auntie Jen", around 1939 when we were teen-agers attending different high schools. Not until after joining the RCNVR two years later, did I screw up enough courage to ask her out to play a game of tennis on the municipal courts near her home. From this beginning and notwithstanding tremendous competition from her scores of boyfriends, I occasionally succeeded in dating her and



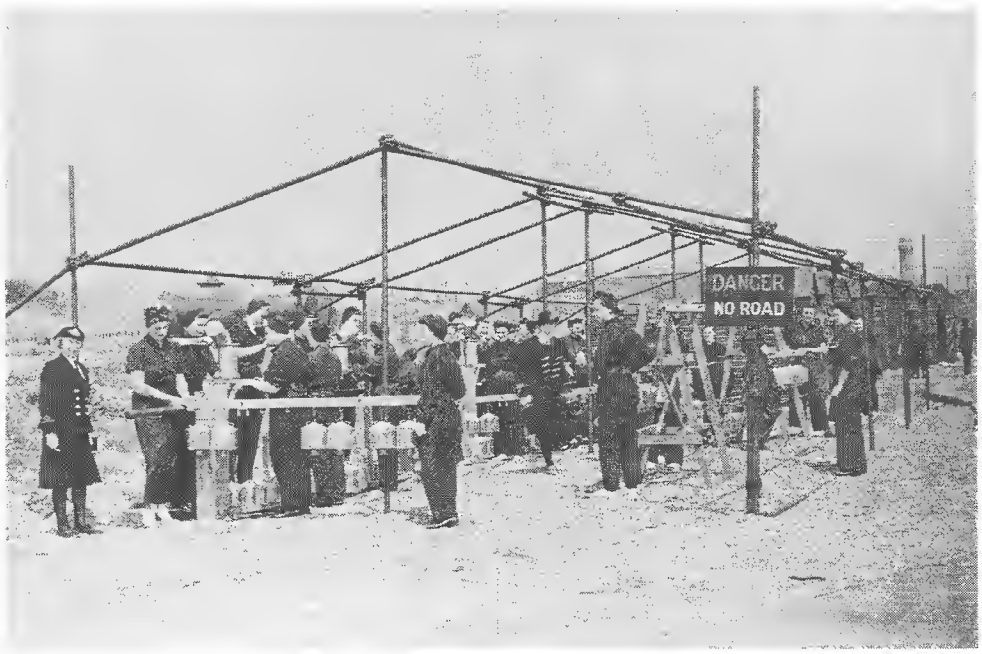
Cecilia Banister, as an RN Wren with the Admiralty's Boom Defence Department in August 1942, is seen here lighting the fuse of a canister to be attached to a hydrogen-filled balloon which would be directed against power-lines on the European mainland.

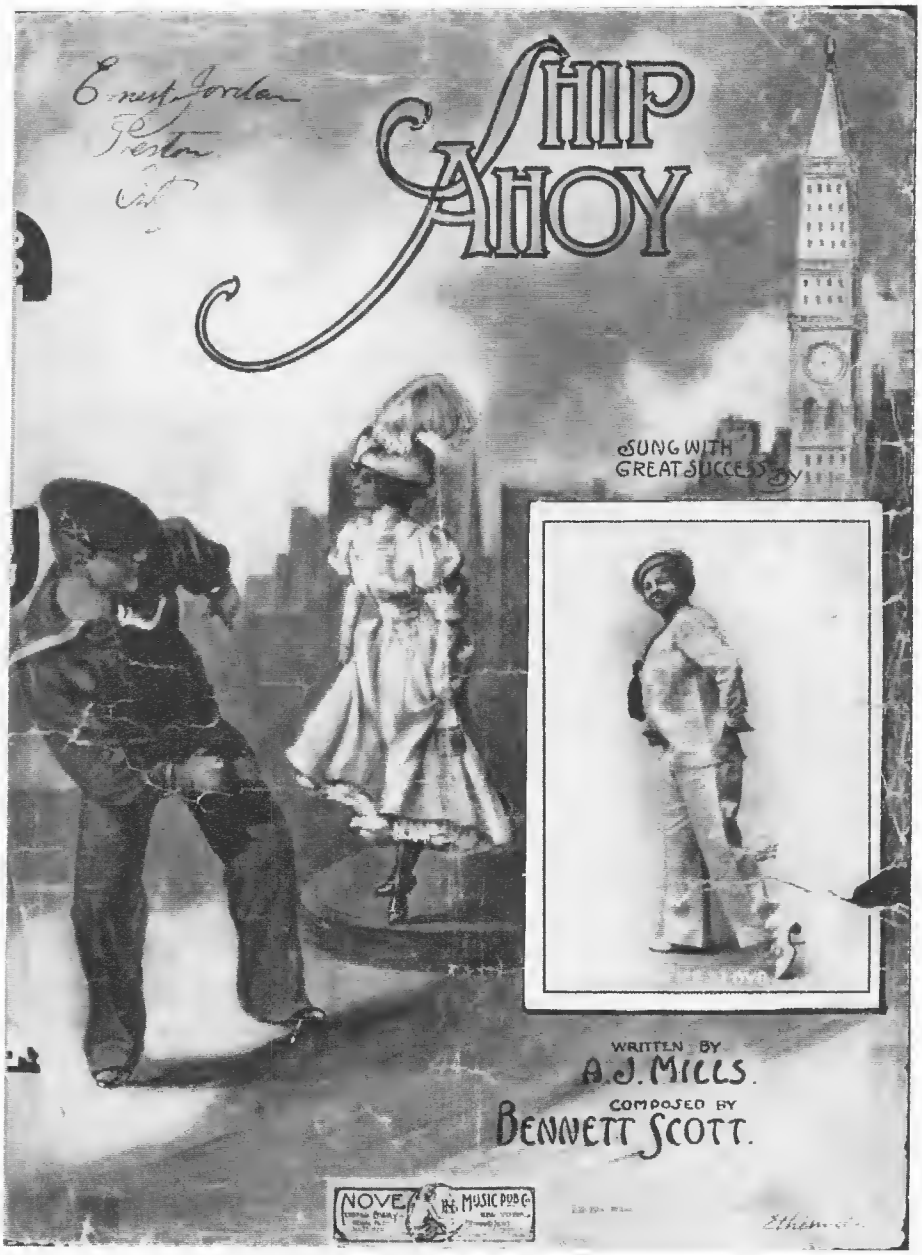
These two photographs, taken in 1942 and loaned to the author by Cecilia Banister (Irvine) in 1994, show a group of BOOM DEFENCE WRENS, based in Felixstowe, on Confidential Operational Duties involved in preparing and releasing hydrogen-filled balloons against enemy targets on the Continent.

(N.B. Cecilia is standing at the left in one photo and second from the left in the other).

In her March 31, 1994 letter accompanying the photographs, she describes the protective clothing worn when arming and releasing the balloons -- "flash-proof jacket & hood (1/2 mica & 1/2 fine copper guage over the face) + protective cream on hands and fire-proof black gloves."







Written by A.J. Mills
Composed by Bennett Scott
Copyrighted MCMIX in England and America
by the Star Music Publishing Co., Ltd., London
Sung with great success by Alice Lloyd

eventually came to realize that we were developing something beyond purely platonic friendship. Cold or, at best, luke-warm water was poured upon my side of the relationship, however, when she began going "steady" with Freddie Hayes a few months before I went overseas at the end of 1943 to train with RCN Beach Commando "W". Nevertheless, during the entire ensuing ten months, we carried on a perpetual correspondence which altogether numbered well over a hundred items (e.g. letters, cards, cables, flowers, presents, parcels). When she broke-up with Freddie in mid-March 1944, our relationship entered a new phase and almost immediately we began to talk (or write) about engagement and marriage. Within six weeks both our families had been alerted to our budding romance and intentions. Soon afterwards came the first bombshell -- my July wounding in Normandy and reports that I was paralyzed. But as I gradually recovered and started walking again, our August correspondence continued to mention engagement and matrimonial plans. With my return to Canada supposedly imminent, I expressed great joy in September letters to Mother and the family. Then a second or twin bombshell exploded. My repatriation papers had been lost or misplaced, so I would have to appear before yet another medical board. While in the process of undergoing this comprehensive examination and assessment, on Oct. 16th I read in a letter Mother wrote to brother Hartland that Peggie had told her she was going to marry someone else. Four days later, I received the following AIR MAIL letter:

TRAFALGAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Montreal

MARGARET MUIR, 1936-41.

Cumming House

"I would rather be sick than idle."

Activities: Vice President of Matric. II. Head of Cumming House. First Basketball Team 1941. Perfect. Gym Lieutenant. Choir.
Favourite Exp.: "I'm waiting for "M".
Pastime: Talking about——
Pet Aversion: Hives.

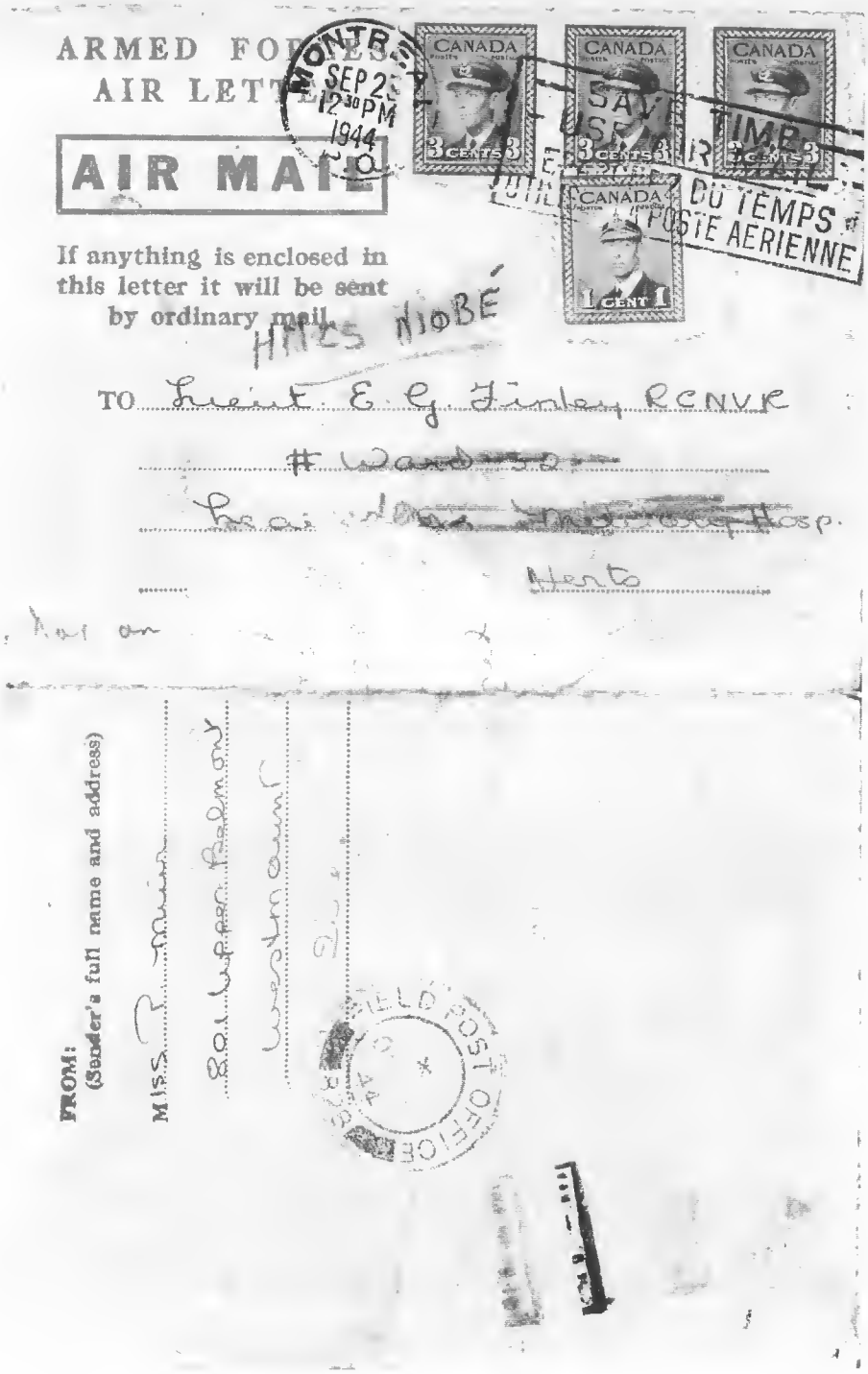




FIRST BASKETBALL TEAM 1940-1941

Left to right: Margaret Burden, Peggy Muir, Norah Young, Elaine Ross (captain), Patricia Dunton, Katharine MacKenzie, Joy Symons.

Extracts from "Trafalgar Echoes"
School Yearbook
June 1941



Post-marked MONTREAL SEP 23, 1944 and addressed to me
at Hertfordshire's Leavesden Military Hospital
from which, four days previously, I had been discharged,
this ARMED FORCES AIR LETTER
was apparently first redirected to HMCS NIOBE
(by FIELD POST OFFICE 828?)
and then forwarded to No.1 N.E.T.D. Thursley, Surrey
where I received it on Oct. 20th

September 23rd 1944.

My dear Skip.-

This is probably the hardest letter I will ever have to write in my life. Please don't judge me too harshly.

I am very much in love with a medical student at McGill and only last night I accepted his fraternity pin, he is a Zeta Psi. We are going to get married very soon.

I know just what you must be thinking but I just can't help it. I could go on and not tell you and try and forget all about Chargo but it would never work out. Please forgive me.

By the way his name is Charles Gordon Campbell commonly known as Chargo. He come from Vancouver. He is 25 years of age and I really do love him with all my heart.

Please understand this and give us your blessing. As yours and your family's love is one of my most treasured possessions.

Yours Truly

Peg

My dear Skip:- *September 23rd 1944*

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By the way his name is Charles Gordon Campbell commonly known as Chargo. He comes from Vancouver. He is 25 years of age and I really love him with all my heart.

Please understand this and give us your blessing as your and your family's love is one of my most treasured possessions.

Yours truly

Peg

Bombshell #3 very nearly wounded me mortally! My immediate recorded reactions were expressed in October 16th letters written respectively to Mother and to the Birks shortly after learning about Peggie's intentions in Mother's letter referred to in the preceding paragraph. To Mother, I wrote:

*..... Now of course I must say something about Peg. I actually read on ahead of H[art]. & saw the news. You'll never know what a shock it was, especially her association with this *married fellow. Her letters had been so sincere & full of love, her desire to become Mrs. E.G. Finley, & all kinds of plans for our future. Then you said at least ½ doz people were glad I was out of it - so I came to the same conclusion. Was so glad to have heard all about it, as I might well have been home by now & not known a word. Really, Mum, it makes my future plans so much easier now..... I'll never get married now - but I don't want Muir to think it's because of her, because she would have had to wait a couple of years in any case. I had promised to marry her - I don't say I didn't - but I never said when. I'll have a hard time living this down I'm afraid, but actually my pride is just the same as ever, & I can't thank you enough, Mother dear, for seeing to it months ago*

*Whether Chargo Campbell was divorced or still married when Peggie accepted his fraternity pin was and has remained unknown to me.

that I never actually bought her an engagement ring. Incidentally I will not write her from over here again. Tomorrow I'm off for a medical board so it'll be some time before I leave for Canada. Must close now - dearest love to all & thanks for the news.

To the Birks, I wrote:

Just heard about Peg yesterday in a letter Mother wrote to Hart. Certainly shook me, & I'll never forget the very second I read it. Somehow I can't believe it, but guess it's life. Anon - - -
It seems almost fate when you mentioned to wait before getting married. As I told Mother, I feel much freer now, & keener to start in at McGill.....

Apart from the many implications and personal effects which this latest bombshell had for me, in recent years a most remarkable coincidence has come to light with respect to the whole affair. On September 23rd, the very day Peggie was writing to me, I happened to write to Mother, and it is just conceivable that Peggie and I were both actually putting pen to paper at exactly the same time.

First regarding Peggie's letter. Bearing a circular postal cancellation which includes "MONTREAL PQ SEP 23 1230 PM 1944", it is logical to deduce that, having accepted Chargo's pin at the Zeta Psi fraternity dance held the night before and being emotionally buoyed up by the whole affair, the next morning (Saturday) Peggie most probably got up early, sat right down (possibly even before breakfast), wrote the letter, and then went out immediately to post it in the mailbox scarcely a block from her house. By allowing a lapse of say three hours for the mailtruck picking up her letter to complete its collection route and for subsequent processing at the local postal station, the "1230 PM" part of the postmark infers that the mailbox in question would have been emptied sometime around 8 or 9 AM (Montreal time). Which means that Peggie actually wrote her letter about 7 AM or even earlier. As for my letter, the approximate hour of

writing is revealed in its opening sentence, which reads: "Just a short note before lunch", thus indicating sometime between 12 noon and 1 PM (British time). Now, by making due allowances for Montreal being on "Daylight Saving" and Britain on "Double British Summer" time in September 1944, there is certainly the possibility that Peggie and I were both in the very act of writing our September 23rd letters at virtually the same time or at least between the same hours, namely, 1000 and 1100 GMT. Indeed, quite a coincidence!

So much for the time coincidence of the two letters. With respect to their relative contents, however, they are entirely antithetical. While Peggie's letter to me (see above) simply announced her imminent betrothal to someone else, in my Sept. 23rd letter to Mother I expressed my feelings towards her as follows:

> *Have been doing some serious thinking lately as regards the future.....My big problem tho' is as regards the young lady. She certainly seems keen to get married, but with my future so darn obscure, I can't see that we'd be anything but a load on many people. What d'ya think, Mama? As long as we are together for a few months all these problems can be ironed out I feel, so I'm not worrying about the marriage angle, other than the fact that we've both certainly committed ourselves pretty outspokenly (or should I say "out-writtenly"). God only knows I'm crazy about her.....*

Reverting once again to the main stream of this present PORTHOLE, we find that my repatriation process began to speed up at the beginning of November. First came word from CNMO in London that my trans-Atlantic passage back to Canada was no longer restricted to hospital ships only. Accordingly, on Nov.17, I found myself among a large contingent of Canadian service personnel who left #1 N.E.T.D. ("Tweedsmuir Camp" in Thursley, Surrey) and headed for Liverpool to board HMT Ile de France for Convoy TA-163's six-day voyage to Halifax. Alas, it was "back to sea again, ship ahoy,

sailor boy" and homeward bound.

Upon arrival in Halifax on Nov.23, a Montreal Daily Star reporter cornered about a dozen of us returning veterans whose homes were in Montreal, took our picture, and filed his story which, appearing in next day's edition, announced that we would be arriving in Montreal that evening at 7:30 p.m.. As it turned out, all those in the group (except me) did in fact detrain in Montreal at the indicated time. My family, having read the story and seen my face in the accompanying picture, had apparently gathered in haste to greet me at the train station. However, unbeknown to my family, the medical authorities in HMCS Stadacona had apparently decided at the last moment to detain me in Halifax for further examination. Consequently, with me being a "no show" at Montreal's Windsor Station, the Finley Family's welcoming committee disappointedly dispersed.

Between Nov.23 and Dec.5 I underwent intensive and extensive examination, as a result of which the following notes and comments were added to my medical record:

> -- SKULL: Stereoscopic A.P., single frontal and stereoscopic right lateral projections of the skull.
>
> These films show a metallic foreign body lying within the skull. On the lateral film, this is localized 11 cm. behind the inner wall of the frontalbone and 4 cm. above the external auditory meatus.
>
> There has been a craniotomy done with an opening of the skull about 4 x 5 cm. in size. In the A.P. projection the foreign body is approximately 2.5 cm. to the right of the midline.
>
> (T.M. McLennan, Surg.Lt.Cmdr., Radiologist)

-- Cranial Nerves:
I : Intact
II : V.A... Rt. eye slight defect in left visual field.
III, IV, VI : Bilateral horizontal coarse nystagmus, more on gaze to right, rapid component to right.
V : Left hemanaesthesia to light touch and pin prick. Moderate weakness of left temporal and massetic muscles. Left corneal reflex absent.
VII : A very slight lower facial asymmetry, on emotional movements.
VIII : Intact.
IX & X : Absent sensation on left side of palate. Absent left pharnygeal and palate reflexes.
XI : Weak left sternomastoid and trapezius muscles.
XII : Tongue deviates to left.

Reflexes: left corneal absent. Left palatal absent.

Biceps	2	3
Triceps	2	3
Radials	2	3
Abdominals	2	1
Crenastirics	2	1
Knee Jerk	2	3-4
Ankle Jerk	2	2-3
Plantar	No clonus	Equivocal

Sensory System: Complete left hemanaesethesia to light touch, pin prick, temperature. Loss of sense of position in left finger, toe and foot. Two-point discrimination lost.

Motor: Left hemiparesis - recovering. Finer movements of left hand and foot lost.

Co-ordination: Moderately good, but on left side show alternate movements with some dysdiadochocinesia and clumsily performed heel-knee-tibia test. Finger-nose-finger moderately good.

Diagnosis: Traumatic (Gun shot wound) lesion of right internal capsule involving motor, complete sensory and minimal involvement of optic radiation.

Category "E" recommended.

(sgd) R. B. McKenzie Surg. Lt. V.R.
for Medical Consultant.

Utilizing all this information from Case Sheet (Specialist Report) documents as well as medical records amassed since the previous July 23rd, a Medical Board of Survey (my fourth) met on November 27 and 28 in HMCS Scotian, Halifax, to recommend my future disposition. The Report of the Board (with Surg.Lt.Cdr. C. Stoddard as President and Surg.Lts. R.B. McKenzie and Dingwall as Members) contains the following relevant points under the indicated Sections:

7. Present Diseases or Injuries: G.S.W. right temporal region with left hemiparesis and hemianaesthesia.

8. Present Condition:

(a) Subjective (in individual's own words) 'I feel a tendency to limp because I can't coordinate my muscles. My left side gets cold and my sense of feeling on this side is poor. There seems to be a continual throbbing in my head which is not like the ordinary headache, in that it is present all the time. I cannot open my mouth fully.'

(b) History of Present Disability.....At present he still notes hemianaesthesia and hemiparesis of left side, is unable to open his mouth wide and has persistent throbbing frontal headaches, persistent 24 hours a day.

10. Physical Examination:

Neurological: See Specialist's report

Reports attached: X-ray chest
X-ray skull
Neurological consultant

11. Were diseases or injuries caused or aggravated:

(a) By intemperance or improper conduct No

(b) By unreasonable refusal to accept treatment No

12. What is the prognosis and probable duration of disability Indefinite

13. Give nature and probable duration of treatment required That he be referred to Montreal Neurological Institute under D.V.A. for further treatment of indefinite duration.

14. Can the former civilian occupation be resumed:
(a) On discharge No -- existing hemiparesis
(b) Following further treatment Possibly

15. Recommendations That he be brought before the Medical Board for recategorization.

16. Does the Board concur with the preceding report?
We concur.

17. Recommendations of Medical Board:
(a) Medical category "E" (b)
Treatment required Further observation and treatment under D.V.A.

18. Approved by: ...for (D.W. Johnstone), Surg.Capt., RCNVR,
Command Medical Officer, C.N.A.

Confirmed by: G.A. Gould, Surg.Lt.Cmdr., RCNVR, for
Medical Director General, RCN, Dec.11, 1944.

TO BE COMPLETED BY D.P. & N.H.

19. This Board was referred to D.P. & N.H. at Halifax, N.S. on Dec.4, 1944.

Remarks of P.M.E. Being transferred to Montreal.
Exam. will be completed there.
[signed by] Pension Medical Examiner.

Remarks of C.M.O. Transfer to Montreal Neurological.
[signed by] Chief Medical Officer.

This case is now cleared by D.P. & N.H. Any further action as may be directed above by P.M.E. or C.N.O. will be implemented after discharge from Naval Service, and the dischargee has been so instructed.

Date 4.12.44 [signed by] District Administrator



Surg. Capt. David L. Johnstone, RCNVR
Senior Medical Officer (East Coast)
(Brother of A/Lt. Cdr. Richard J. Johnstone, RCNVR,
former Commanding Officer & D/PBM, RCN Beach Commando "W")

So now, for further treatment and final assessment, it was inland to my home port of Montreal from where I had departed just twelve months previously to serve overseas in Combined Operations as an Assistant Beachmaster with RCN Beach Commando "W". Arriving in Montreal on Dec.6, I was admitted a week later to the Royal Victoria Hospital (Ross Pavilion, 5th floor) where I underwent yet another complete physical examination. The following comprise selected comments which appear on the CASE HISTORY SHEET's six-page medical report:

23.12.44 A. Final Diagnosis A metallic foreign body in the right hemisphere, probably in the posterior lid of the capsule

14.12.44 B. COMPLAINTS:

1. Headaches - since July 1944
2. Weakness of the left side of the body - since July 1944
3. Impairment of vision of the right eye - since July 1944

C. PRESENT ILLNESS:

The pt. was well until July 23rd, 1944. While serving in France at that time he was struck by shrapnel in the right temple. He remembers events fairly clearly, but does not actually recall being hit. He continued to drive his jeep a little farther, and then scrambled out in order to find cover. He fell down as his legs would not carry him. He crawled to cover, using his right knee and right arm. He remembers being looked at, and then, apparently, he lost consciousness. The above story is as clear a picture as can be obtained, as the patient changes minor details each time he tells it. He can recall only 2-3 isolated incidents in the next 10 days.

On August 2nd, 1944, he woke up at Basingstoke Hospital. He had a terrible headache. He says that he had been operated upon in France, and all but one piece of shrapnel had been removed from his head. His headaches have persisted since. They are worse in the mornings. He describes them as a generalized dull ache, which becomes worse when he bends over or when he lies down; no association with nausea or vomiting.

The patient's next complaint is weakness and a "funny feeling" in the whole left side of his body. He first noticed it about five minutes after he was hit when his knees gave out from under him. The weakness of the left arm and leg has gradually been disappearing. He was allowed out of bed on August 18th, 1944; and he states that since that time his walking has gradually improved, and at the present time he does not limp. The lack of sensation has, however, persisted. He says that there are times when he doesn't seem to know exactly where his left leg or arm are. He used to be left-handed in most things - now he uses his right hand. The left leg seems to get cold more rapidly than does the right one.

The patient states that since his accident the vision in the right eye has been less than that in the left. He also states that he is unable to open his mouth as widely as previously.

D. SYSTEMIC INQUIRY:

Extremities: Weakness and tingling in extremities, as described in H.P.I. The patient was in bed from July 23rd until August 18th, 1944.

E. PHYSICAL EXAMINATION:

Extremities: To be described under Neuromuscular examination. However, the left foot appears to be colder than the right.

F. NEUROLOGICAL EXAMINATION:

Mental: The patient is a bright, friendly, cooperative young man. His story varies a little in the telling of minor details, particularly as to the events immediately preceding and following his injury.

Cranial Nerves:

1.	Ofactory is normal.
2.	Optic - fundi appear clear. Pupils are round, the right being a little larger than the left. Both react briskly to light and accommodation. No nystagmus.
3.4.6	No muscle imbalance.
5.	Slight decrease in pain over all branches of left side. Motor power is normal.
7.8.9.10.	All normal.
11.	Slight weakness of left trapezius muscle.
12.	No tongue deviation.

Motor System:

Tone: No gross abnormality. Power: Some weakness of the left arm and left leg in all muscles. However, he is able to balance on either leg.

Co-ordination:

Impairment of whole left side of body to light touch and pain. Two-point test faulty on the left side. Vibration, heat and cold all normal.

Deep Reflexes:	Right	Left	Superficial Reflexes:
Biceps	x	x	Babinski: negative bilaterally.
Triceps	x	x	
Supinator	x	x	Abdominals: x,x.
K.J.	x	xx	
A.J.	x	xx	
No clonus			

Autonomic: Left foot slightly colder than the right. Both dorsalis pedis arteries are palpable.

SUMMARY OF POSITIVE FINDINGS:

Subjective:

1.	Shrapnel injury, right temple, in July 1944.
2.	Period of unconsciousness - up to 10 days.
3.	Awoke with severe headache and weakness of left side of body - these complaints have persisted to date.

Objective:

1. Some weakness of left side of body.
2. Impairment of sensation - touch and pain - over whole left side of body.

IMPRESSION:

1. Scar tissue over right motor and sensory areas of cortex.
2. Foreign body in right side of intracranial cavity.
3. Hematoma, localized over rt. pre and post-Rolandic areas.

DR. M.K. YOUNG.

Dec.15/44

SPECIAL EXAMINATION:

He was left handed.

Shrapnel wound. Rt. temporal region.

Fundi O.K. fields O.K. to rough test. Pupils equal and active.

E.O.M. O.K.

Cranial nerves O.K. perhaps some very slight flatness left nose labial fold - cannot open jaws fully on account of contracture of right temporal muscles.

N.S. He walks normally when careful. Can snap fingers of left hand. No paralysis, no in-coordination in F.N. or K.H.T. test with eye closed.

S.S. Loss to pinprick over entire left side of body, face and limbs. Loss of sense of position to passive movements of toes.

Reflexes: Tendon jerks left side relatively more active. Left plantar extension.
Left abdominal relatively diminished.
Recognises objects in left hand fairly well; partial astereognosis however in recognising coins. Impaired two-point sensibility.

COLIN RUSSEL, M.D.

Dec.18/44

X/RAY REPORT:

SKULL: P.A. stereo A.P. and stereo right lateral views have been made. There is a defect in the right temporal region measuring about 3.5 x 4.5 cm. in diameter. A metallic foreign body 2 cm. in length by about 8 mm. in diameter is present deep in the right cerebral hemisphere with its inner pole approximately 2.3 cm. from the mid-line. This lies with its central portion on a plane 4 cm. above the sella turcica and about 2 cm. behind the posterior clinoids. Presumably it is just lateral [to] the optic thalmus. No other foreign bodies are visible and there is no suggestion of any depressed bone. No intracranial calcification is shown and there is no deformity of the sella turcica. The sinuses are not grossly abnormal and there is nothing remarkable about the mastoids.

IMPRESSION: There is one moderately large metallic foreign body lying deeply in the right cerebral hemisphere. A subtemporal decompression is present on the right side.

A.E. CHILDE, M.D.

Dec.22/44

I have reviewed the history and findings with Dr. Russel and can add nothing. The visual fields are full on rough testing. The optic discs are flat and cups are preserved and yet vessels are tortuous and veins are full.

He does have headaches with changes of position and lying with head low. The subtemporal decompression becomes excavated when he sits up and out flush when he lies horizontally.

I agree that with his present condition as satisfactory as it is he should not have an encephalogram, but before he is advised to go south an electrogram should be done and if spikes are present it would be well to put him on phenobarbital and even dilantin.

Before final decision is made as to disability I suppose visualization of ventricles should be done.

He is left handed - almost ambidextrous. No speech disturbance.

No bruit on auscultation of head.

W.V. CONE, M.D.

Dec.22/44

E.E.G. REPORT:

ABNORMALITY: There were random delta waves recorded continuously throughout the examination. There were no large amplitude discharges of any form and hyperventilation failed to bring out any definite epileptiform activity.

BACKGROUND: The background alpha rhythm was fairly normal, except on the right side when it was intermingled with some slow wave activity.

LOCALIZATION: The slow wave activity was from the right hemisphere almost entirely except with monopolar leads where the slow waves occurred occasionally from the left side also. It was not localized definitely in the right hemisphere, but extended over rather a large area from the temporal to the parieto-occipital region. Some phase reversals occurred over the temporal region.

IMPRESSION: The electrogram indicates a deep-seated lesion of the right hemisphere, causing continuous delta waves, signifying unresolved damage, but insofar as the present record is concerned, there is no evidence for an epileptogenic lesion at the present time.

H.H. JASPER, M.D.

Dec.23/44

URINE: Clear, dk. amber, 1027 acid; alb neg: sug 0, negative microscopic.

Dec.23/44

Stereoscopic x-rays head show metal foreign body in right hemisphere probably in posterior limb of capsula, which fully accounts for all findings - optic radiation not involved. My reaction is that there is no present indication for further examination such as pneumo-encephalogram. He should continue exercises with practicing use of left hand. He should pay particular attention to avoid getting any part of left side frozen as he has loss to heat and cold on that side as well. He has an opportunity to go south this winter and this would be an excellent thing and should be sympathetically considered.

COLIN RUSSEL, M.D.

COURSE IN THE HOSPITAL:
Uneventful.

MEDICATION ON DISCHARGE:
None.

Dec.23/44 Patient discharged from the hospital to-day.

Condition on Discharge Unchanged
Disposal of Case To Unit
Date December 23/44 LIONEL L. PLOUFFE, M.D.
Medical Officer i/c Case

Such then are some of the principal remarks appearing on my Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) records. With respect to Dr. Cone's Dec.22 statement regarding my overall present condition (see p.84), it is surprising to find the word "satisfactory" replaced by "unsatisfactory" on the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI)'s CASE HISTORY SHEET which dealt with exactly the same topic. Apart from this "slip up", the comments contained in the respective RVH and MNI assessments are quite similar, as the latter, prepared by Dr.M.K.Young (Neurological Interne) and dated 1-2-45, appears to be a summary of the former. The final note on the MNI CASE HISTORY SHEET indicates that the whole exercise has been carried out at the request of the Federal Government's Department of Pensions and National Health.

Thus, for the time being, was I finished with hospitals, tests, and treatment. After spending Christmas quietly at home and being discharged, medically unfit, from the RCNVR on Feb.14, 1945, I hitched a ride in the unheated bomb-bay of an RCAF aircraft to Nassau where, harbouring at the Birks' "Coastguard" bungalow, I spent the ensuing eight weeks undergoing the healthy and happy transition from Beach Commando to Beach Comber. How vividly do I recall my return flight to Montreal via Chicago. It was

SKIP



from
Beach Commando in Normandy
July 1944
to
Beach Comber in Nassau
February 1945

the 12th of April, and O'Hare airport was as silent as a cemetery, stunned by the news of President Roosevelt's death. As the US Ninth Army was crossing the Elbe in Europe, in the United States Vice President Harry S. Truman was humbly declaring: "Fellow Americans: I feel like a bale of hay has just fallen on my head. I ask you to pray for me, and I mean it".

Shortly after my arrival back in Montreal, the Department of Veterans Affairs informed me that I would receive a 15% disability pension. A few years later, after an examination confirmed that deterioration in my left eye had resulted directly from the gun shot wound, the pension was increased to 20%. Then in 1965, when the sensory dysfunction on my left side proved to have worsened and an inability to sing in tune or even distinguish between musical notes was found to prevail, a full reassessment of my overall condition resulted in the pensionable disability being changed to 40%. In recommending a doubling of the percentage, the three medical advisers who examined me felt that my pathological condition had been "underassessed for some time".

As the years passed, I came to realize that while my "port-side" hand, arm, and leg powers were becoming somewhat better, I continued to experience considerable difficulty with respect to my left foot. This condition resulted directly from the fact that I had very little feeling in the whole left side of my body. By far the greatest inconvenience, as a consequence, was my inability to maintain my balance in turning to the right when dancing, skating, skiing, etc.. An oversimplified way of describing what the shrapnel did is to say that it bruised my motor muscles and shattered my sensory network: and while the muscles subsequently regained full power, the network

Wife-to-be

TRAFALGAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
Montreal



RAE HUNTER, "Hunt", 1939-43.

Ross House

"A carefree, laughing girl, a sport, a friend,
In short, a girl on whom we all depend."

Activities: Head Prefect. President of Form VIA. Sub-Editor of the Mag. Head of Ross House. First Basketball Team. Gym Lieutenant. Choir.

Pastime: Falling for Margie's stories.

Pet Aversion: Listening to Hall's singing.

Probable Destination: Orange blossoms and Lohengrin.



Extracts from "Trafalgar Echoes"
School Yearbook
June 1943

has never recovered. Obviously, and particularly during the first few years, many major adjustments had to be made especially regarding physical activities. Indeed my whole life-style, which heretofore had centered around sports and the outdoors, became transformed into more of a literary venture -- ideas, books, reading, teaching, and the like. And simply because the first twenty years of my life as well as my basic temperament certainly did not particularly prepare me for such a major change, the whole business has constituted a life-long challenge.

Graduation from McGill University in 1948 and marriage in 1949 were followed by Master and Doctoral degrees from Columbia University in New York, all being greatly facilitated by financial assistance granted to Canadian war veterans and pensioners. By 1960 our family consisted of three daughters and a son, and my career in teaching had reached its mid-point.

One day while browsing through my maternal grandfather's extensive personal papers (he had died in 1946), I happened upon a war-time exchange of correspondence between him and the Honourable Angus L. Macdonald, Minister of National Defence for Naval Services. The contents of the two letters fairly struck me between the eyes as from an exploding bombshell! The question as to why my next of kin was never notified about my July 23, 1944 injury was herein answered! And to think that I had no previous knowledge of either the reason or the correspondence. Unfortunately I have never again seen these letters; and the copies I made of them, which my wife recalls reading, have been misplaced or lost. Meanwhile, all attempts to date to find either of the letters in the National Archives of Canada and in the Macdonald Collection held in



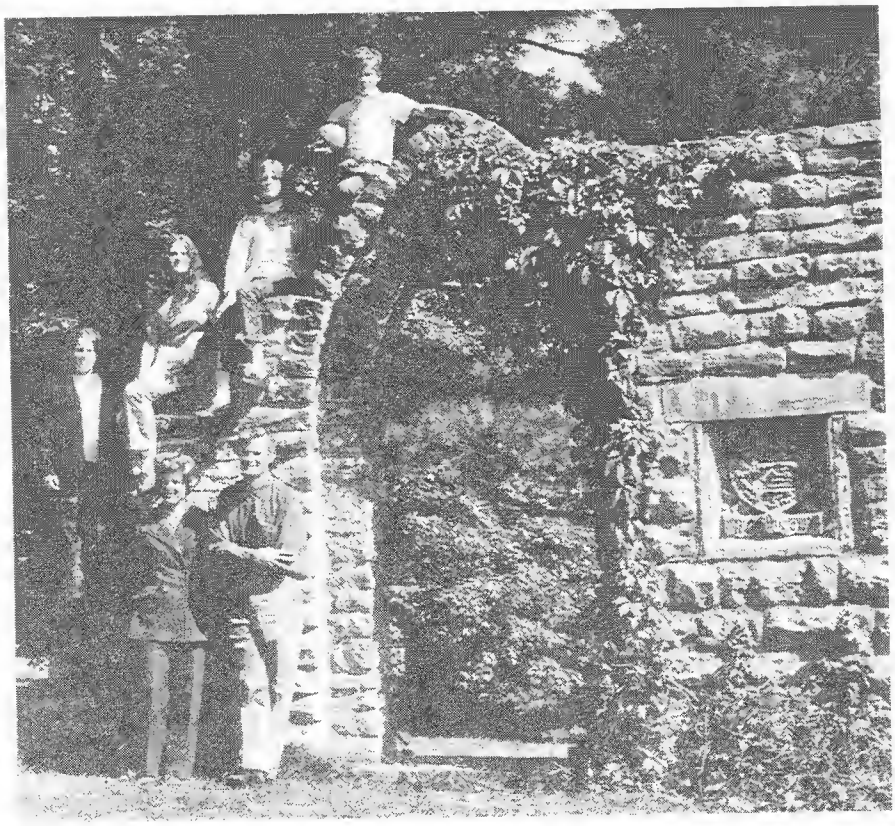
Catherine Rae Hunter becomes Mrs. E.G.Finley
June 25th, 1949



Mother and Crew
L/R: Linda, Diana, Barbara, Gerald
Montreal West, 1960



Growing old: Mother & Father
Growing up (L/R): Barbi, Linda, Dani, Ger
Senneville, P.Q., 1967



Mackenzie King estate
Kingsmere, P.Q., 1969

the Nova Scotia Provincial Archives have proved unsuccessful. The following reconstruction of the two letters' respective contents will, therefore, have to bear the above caveats in mind.

The Hon. Angus L. Macdonald,
Minister of National Defence
for Naval Services
Ottawa, Ont.

Apt. B. 101,
Gleneagles Apartments,
3940 Cote des Neiges Rd.,
Montreal, P. Que.

Dear Mr. Minister:

**August 10, 1944*

I am writing on behalf of my daughter, Mrs. M. Ross Finley, whose son, Lieutenant Eric Gault Finley, RCNVR, was apparently seriously wounded on July 23rd while serving with RCN Beach Commando "W" in Normandy. I wonder whether, as next of kin, Mrs. Finley can expect to receive official notification from your Ministry about her son's injury.

Realizing you must be constantly faced with balancing regulations against individual cases, may I nevertheless mention that just recently we have learned from a reliable source that as a result of the injury Lt. Finley was unconscious for several days and is unable to walk.

Having no intention, however, of prolonging the matter, we beseech you to ensure that, in the future and in so far as circumstances permit, all regulations are followed with respect to notifying next of kin about Canadian service personnel casualties.

I remain, yours sincerely,
John W. Ross

*This is an estimated date, as is August 20 in the following letter.

Mr. John W. Ross,
Gleneagles Apartments,
Apt. B. 101,
Montreal, P.Que.

National Defence Headquarters,
Ottawa, Ont.

**August 20, 1944*

Dear Mr. Ross:

In reply to your letter of August 10, 1944 concerning the injury sustained on July 23rd by Lieutenant Eric Gault Finley, RCNVR, I am pleased to advise you that it was not considered necessary to inform Mrs. M. Ross Finley, his mother and next of kin, of the injury.

As you may very well appreciate, Mr. Ross, it would take an inordinate amount of time as well as of human resources to notify next of kin whenever any member of our Armed Forces sustained an injury. Consequently our policy calls for notification to be sent at an appropriate time only when an injury results in death or is officially assessed as serious or life-threatening, and in Lieutenant Finley's case, none of these conditions was judged to pertain.

Respectfully yours,

Angus L. Macdonald,
Minister of National Defence for Naval Services

In the first place, does the Minister's reply not overlook Section 4 of Naval Order 3741 (see pp.41-42) which came into effect on June 24, 1944? Secondly, does the reply not say, in so many words, that Finley's injury was simply

NOT SERIOUS ENOUGH?

*This is an estimated date, as is August 10 in the previous letter.

EXCLUSIVE CONNECTION WITH WESTERN UNION CABLE SERVICE

CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAPHS

W M ARMSTRONG GENERAL MANAGER
TORONTO

1945 MAY 6 PM 10 51

(50)

RXGA75 41 2 EXTRA GB=RCAF OTTAWA ONT 6 1012P

E B FINLEY, REPORT DELIVERY=
320 COTE ST ANTOINE RD MTL=

2979

M9864 PLEASED TO ADVISE THAT YOUR SON FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HARTLAND ROSS FINLEY J ONE FOUR NOUGHT THREE NOUGHT HAS RETURNED TO HIS UNIT AFTER HAVING BEEN OVERDUE AT HIS BASE AFTER AIR OPERATIONS OVERSEAS MAY SECOND STOP LETTER FOLLOWS=
:RCAF CASUALTIES OFFICER.

FORM 8122

WELCOME NEWS
about brother Hart

ADDRESS REPLY TO:
THE SECRETARY,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR AIR,
OTTAWA, ONTARIO.

OUR FILE J14030 (R.O.4)
REF. YOUR
DATED

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

OTTAWA, Canada, 7th May, 1945.

Mr. E.B. Finley,
320 Cote St. Antoine Rd.,
Montreal, Quebec.

Dear Mr. Finley:

Confirming my telegram of racent date, advice has been received from the Royal Canadian Air Force Casualties Officer, Overseas, that your son, Flight Lieutenant Hartland Ross Finley, arrived safely at his unit after having been overdue at his base from air operations Oversees on May 2nd, 1945.

The original report stated that your son was the sole occupant of an aircraft which took off to carry out a fighter sweep on May 2nd, 1945. His aircraft was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire and was seen to creeh in the area of Segeberg, Germany, at 4:00 P.M. A subesquent report stetee that your son arrived safely at his unit having secaped by parachute.

I join with you and the members of your family in your joy in your son's safety.

Youre sincerely,

R.C.A.F. Casualty Officer,
for Chief of the Air Staff.

R.C.A.F. G. 32B
300M—1-44 (1778)
E.Q. 858-G-32B

P.S. A few hours prior to the cessation of all fighting in Europe at midnight, May 8th-9th, 1945, ("VE-DAY"), Mother received word in a CN telegram from the Department of National Defence that Hartland, having been overdue after May 2nd air operations, had since returned to his unit. Fortunately, however, if the news caused her to shed any tears, they weren't of sadness because only two days previously her cousin Arnold Heeney -- Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Principal Secretary -- had telephoned from Ottawa to advise her that Hartland was safe and sound with his Spitfire squadron at Saltau in Germany. Apparently, in the process of shooting down a German JU-88 on May 2nd near Hamburg, his own plane burst suddenly into flames and he had to bail out. After avoiding capture for forty-eight hours, he "surrendered" to a British Sherman tank crew at a road intersection and was subsequently transported by an Allied staff car back to the Saltau station. After supper in the mess hall, he was introduced to Air Vice Marshal Frank McGill, RCAF, who just happened to be visiting the Canadian air base. On learning that Hartland was a son of his friend Eric Finley, the AVM assured him that upon his return to Ottawa later in the week, he'd get word to Hart's next of kin. So it was that McGill duly alerted Heeney who in turn contacted Mother.

Hartland's May 2nd, 1945 flight, which ended his second tour of operations, gave him the "distinction" of having bailed out safely on both his very first and also his very last operational missions of the War. On August 12th, 1943, en route back to the UK from a sweep over the Pas de Calais region, his Spitfire ran out of fuel. Having emitted a "M'aider" (also written "MayDay") radio signal, he bailed out and minutes afterwards found himself Skipper of a rubber dinghy in the English Channel. Nauseated, completely chilled and soaked to the bones, he was eventually picked up three hours later by an Air-Sea rescue launch just as darkness closed down. His only regret (as he reminiscently recalls) was, because of the nausea, having to turn down the tot of hot rum which his rescuers proffered him. His subsequent rewards comprised membership in the "Goldfish" Club and a brooch from the GQ Company, manufacturers of the parachute utilized on the occasion.

P.P.S. Now had it not been for Japan's unexpectedly sudden capitulation four months afterwards, marking the end of World War II, who knows but that Mother would have been subjected to yet another "next of kin" experience. For in the summer of 1945, my younger brother Alan, a lieutenant in the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment of Canada), was standing by to proceed overseas -- East or West -- as the latest member of the Fighting Finleys. Fortunately, by never having to engage in actual combat, he thereby spared Mother any further anxiety regarding the well being of her three sons.

LES FRÈRES FINLEY



(de la gauche au droit): Skip, Alan, Hart
waiting for their dates to exit the powder-room
St. Andrew's Ball
Windsor Hotel
Montreal
1945

Note Hart's DFC ribbon, Operation Tour Wing & bar, and wound stripe.

MEDICAL RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS, 1944

	Date	Time	Normandy
1.	July 23	1200	#10 Cdn. Field Ambulance. Field Medical Card.
2.			Add'l Notes by Unit M.O. and Field Ambulance.
3.		1320	#3 Cdn. Casualty Clearing Station. Admitted.
4.		1430	#3 Cdn. CCS. Admitted to Resus.
5.		1820	#6 MNSU (75th Brit. Gen. Hospital). Admitted.
6.		2000	#6 Mobile Neuro-Surgical Unit. Operation.
7.			#6 MNSU. Operation Card for Head Injuries.
8.			#6 MNSU. Interchange of Medical Information. Follow-up Card.
9.	24-5		#6 MNSU. Penicillin [Schedule & Doses].
10.	25		Air Evacuation Label. Section C.
11.	25		[Patient Status] -- LYING/SEVERE
12.	25		Ship Label. Diagnosis (briefly) - SEVERE
			England
13.	26	0030	Basingstoke Neurological & Plastic Surgery Hospital. Notification of Admission.
14a.		0300	BNPS. Request culture from head wound swab.
14b.	27		BNPS. Laboratory Report on swab culture.
15.	26-7		BNPS. Skull X-ray Request & Report.
16.	27 to Aug.2		BNPS. Daily urine specimen Laboratory Reports.
17.	Aug.1-2		BNPS. Skull X-ray Request & Report.
18.	4		BNPS. Provisional PULHEMS Grading.
19.	14-15		BNPS. Hospital or Sick List Record. (2pp.)
20	15		BNPS. Hospital Discharge Notification.
21.	15	1200	#23 Canadian General Hospital (Leavesden). Notification of Admission.
22.	28-31		#23 CGH. Medical History of an Invalid. (4pp.)
23.	Sept.15		#23 CGH. Treatment Charts.
24.	18		#23 CGH. Hospital or Sick List Record. (2pp.)
25.	18		#23 CGH. Medical History Sheet for Men in Naval Service of Canada.
26.	18		#23 CGH. Hospital Discharge Notification.
27.	Oct.19/26		BNPS. Medical History of an Invalid. (4pp.)
			Canada
28.	Nov.23		HMCS Scotian (Halifax). X-ray. HMCS Scotian. Inspection of Chests (DND)
29.	23		Case Sheet (Specialist Report) -- Eyes.
30.	23		Case Sheet (Specialist Report) -- Skull.
31.	23		Case Sheet (Specialist Report) -- Chief Medical Consultant (2pp.)
32.	23		Mazzini Slide blood test.
33.	27-Dec.12		Report of a Medical Board of Survey. (4pp.)
34.	Dec.14-23		Montreal Neurological Institute & Royal Victoria Hospital. Case History. (8pp.)

MEDICAL TERMS

A.J. (ankle jerk)
Albustit staphylococcus (see Staphylococcus)
Amnesia (Loss of Memory)
Astereognosis (Inability to Identify Common Objects by Touch)
A.T. (Anti-Tetanus)
Auricle (Ear Lobe)
Auscultation (Act of Listening)
Clonus (Spasm)
Cremasterics (Spermatic Cord Muscles)
CSF (Cerebrospinal Fluid)
Debridement (Cleaning)
Diathermy (Heating of Body Tissue)
Dura (Outer Brain & Spinal Cord Membrane)
Dysdiadochocinesia (Impairment of Coordination)
EOM (Extra Occular Movement)
Extensor (Muscle that Extends a Joint)
Flaccid (Weak, Lax, and Soft)
Flexor (Muscle that Flexes a Joint)
F.N. (finger/nose)
Fundi (Bottom Part of Sac)
Hematoma (Localized Mass of Clotted Blood)
Hemihypesthesia (Decreased Sensation on One Side of Body)
Hemiparesis (Partial Paralysis on One Side of Body)
Hemiplegia (Paralysis on One Side of Body)
K.H.T. (knee/heel/toe)
K.J. (knee jerk)
Lac (Laceration)
Midline (Central Brain Location)
Morbidity (Prevalence of Disease)
Morphine (Anti-Pain Narcotic)
n.a.d. (No Abnormality Detected or No Appreciable Disease)
Nystagmus (Nodding or Oscillation)
Occipital (Back or Hinder Part of Brain)
Papillaedemar (Optic Nerve Swelling)
Parietal (Pair of Bones, Forming Part of Sides & Top of Skull)
Pineal (Body Situated behind 3rd Ventricle of the Brain)
Plantar (Pertaining to Sole of Foot)
PMI (Point of Maximal Impulse)
POP (Plaster of Paris)
PP (Pin Prick)
Primary Union (Post-operative Healing)
PTA (Post Traumatic Amnesia)
Pterion (Anchor Point of Brain Bones)
RA (Retrograde Amnesia)
Retrograde (Formerly or Backwards in Time)
Sella Turcica (Central Part of Brain)
Sequellae (Morbid Condition Resulting from Previous Disease or Injury)
Squamous (Scalelike Feather or Bone Part)
Staphylococcus (Pus-Producing Bacteria)
Strabismus (Cross-Eyed or Squinting)
Sulpha Drugs (Pre-Penicillin Antibiotics)
Trapezius (Back of Neck Muscles)
Trauma (State of Shock or Morbid Condition)
Turcica (see Sella Turcica)

R C N



Snaps and Scraps

"TENDER BEHIND"

Noticing a seaboat being towed by an inbound destroyer, the duty signalman on the harbour gate-vessel flashed out the following question to the warship:

"Did you know that you have a tender behind?"

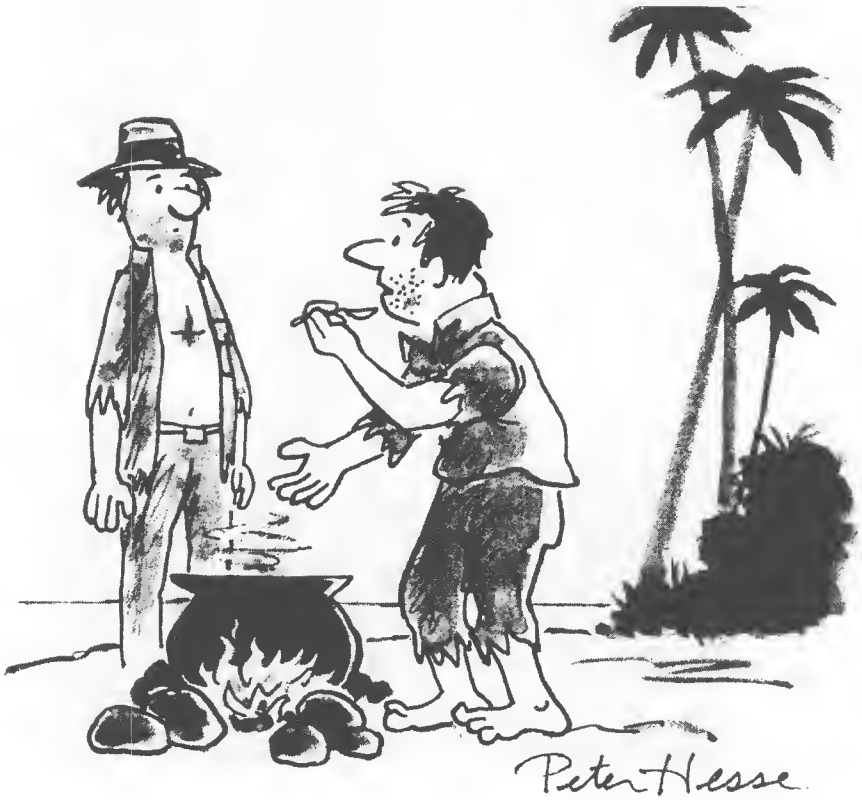
The following pages contain a random sampling of the cargo found stowed aboard the tender.

UNITED - WE - CONQUER

IN-MEMORY-OF
THE-OFFICERS-AND
MEN-OF
THE-COMMANDOS
WHO-DIED-IN-THE
SECOND-WORLD-WAR
1939-1945
THIS-COUNTRY-WAS
THEIR-TRAINING
GROUND

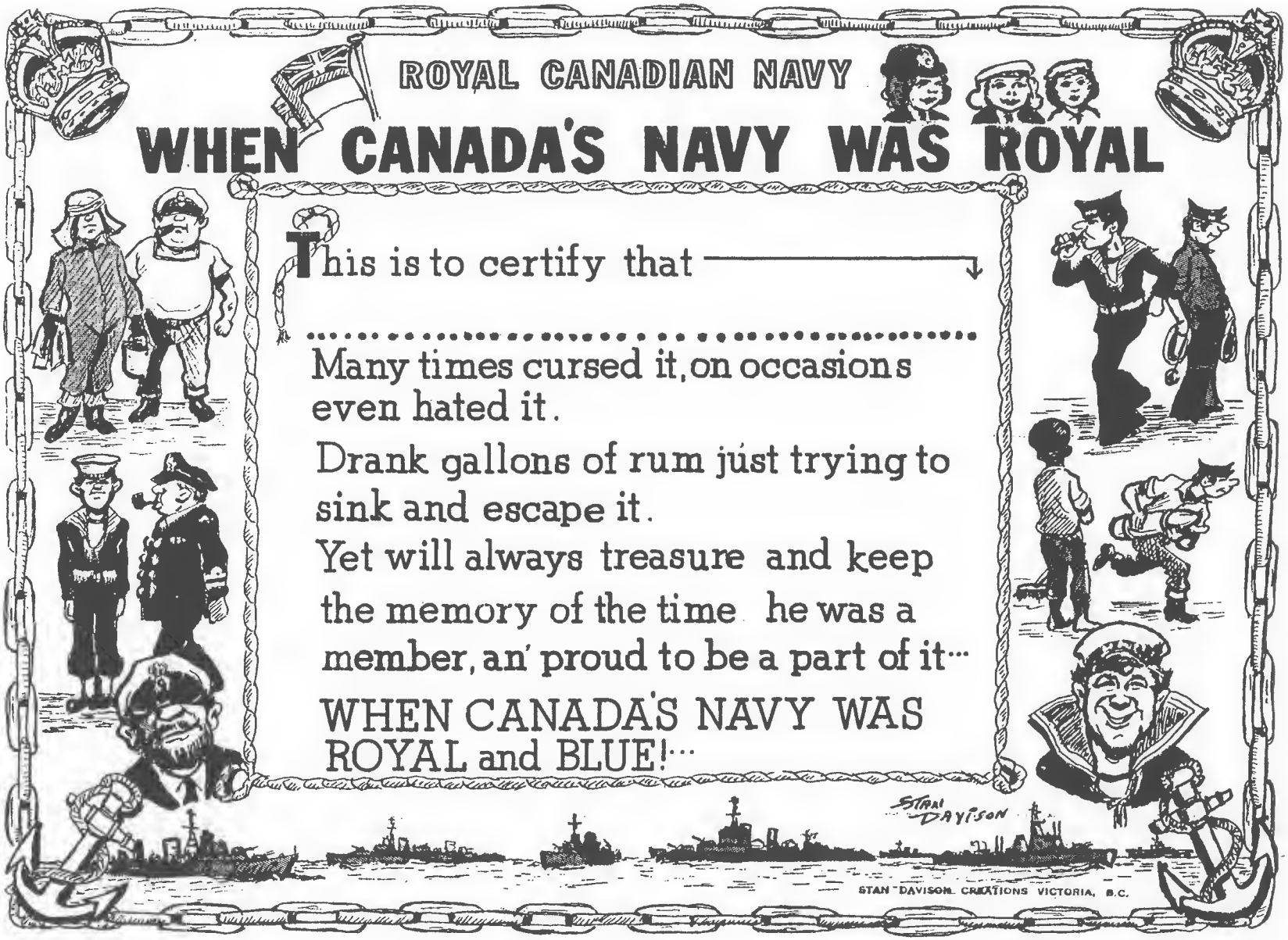


Erected in 1952 and unveiled two years later by the Queen Mother, the design by Dundee sculptor Scott Sutherland, ARSA, was selected by WW II commando Lord Lovat from two dozen submissions. Its three life-size bronze figures, in battle order with rifles slung, stand atop a nine-foot high granite plinth and gaze out across the countryside with Ben Nevis in the distant background. The memorial is located on top of a ridge near Spean Bridge, Inverness-shire.



"Too much flotsam and not enough jetsam."

Try Our Recipe



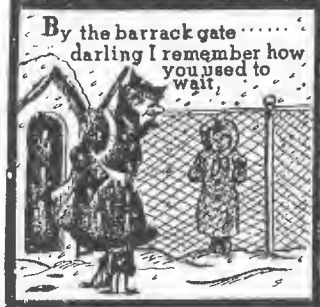
COPYRIGHT STAN DAVISON, VICTORIA, B.C.

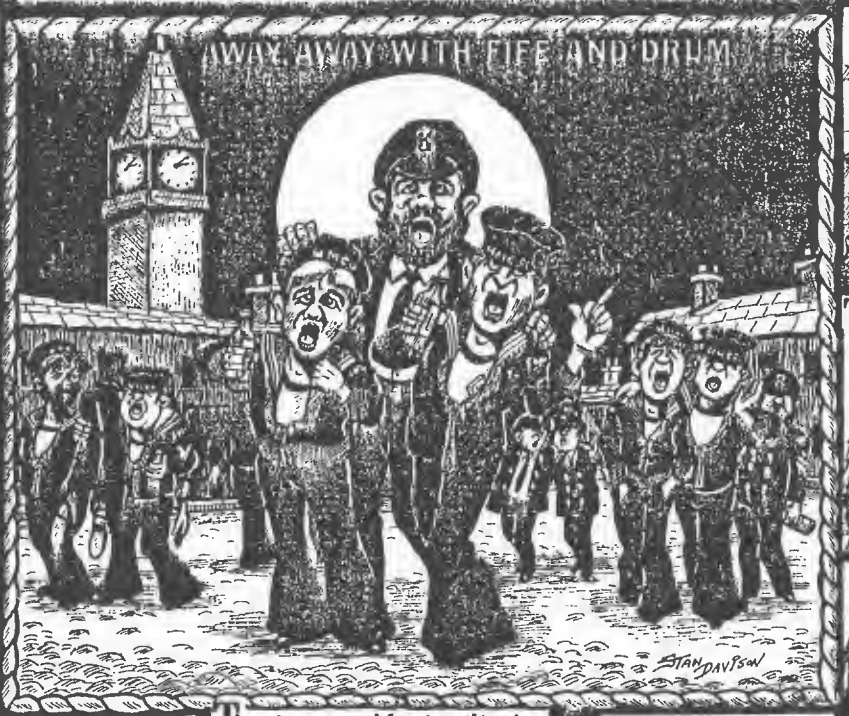
WHEN CANADA'S NAVY WAS ROYAL & BLUE

1939 THE SHIPS, THE PEOPLE, THE SONGS OF W-W II 1945

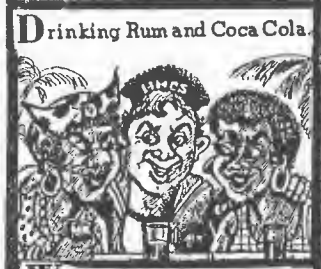
R.C.N.R. R.C.N. R.C.N.V.R.

A NOSTALGIA MUSICAL SALUTE TO OUR NAVY.

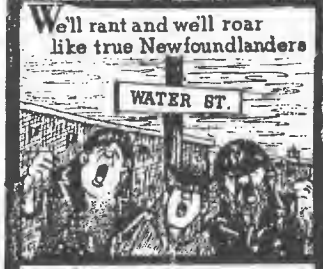




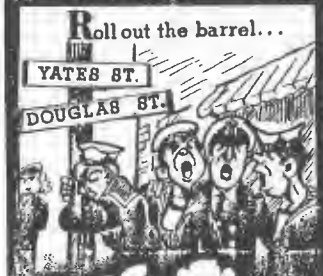








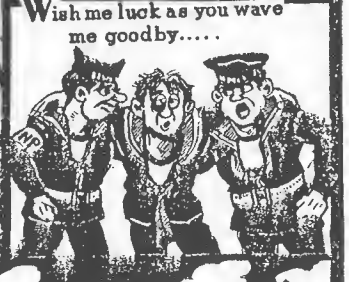






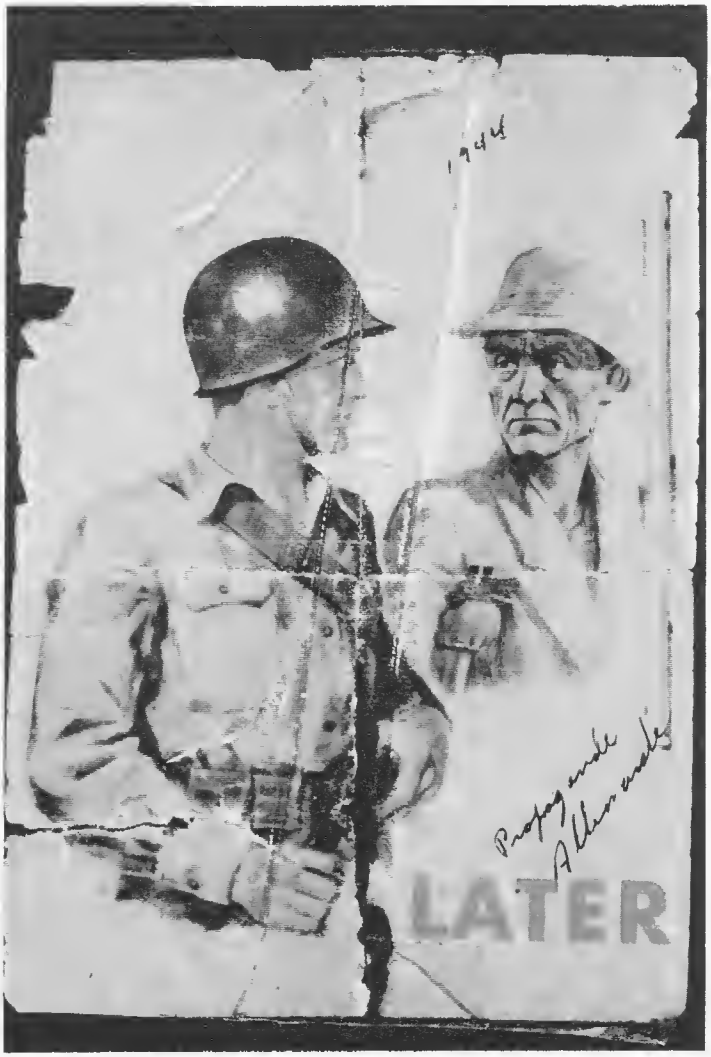






STAN DAVISON CREATIONS VICTORIA, B.C.

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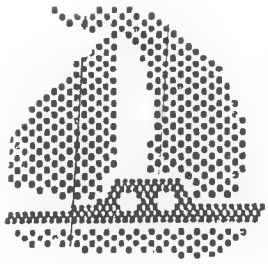


German propaganda / Propagande allemande

THE SAILOR'S PSALM

"They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For at His word the stormy wind ariseth which lifteth up the waves thereof. They are carried up to heaven, and down again to the deep; their soul melteth away because of the trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end."

"So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, He delivereth them out of their distress. For he maketh the storm to cease so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they are at rest; and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be."



THE NAVAL PRAYER



CORNWALL, ONT.

"O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest the heavens and ruleth the raging of the sea; who has compassed the waters with bounds until day and night come to an end; be pleased to receive into thy Almighty and most gracious protection the persons of us thy servants, and the fleet in which we serve. Preserve us from the dangers of the sea, and from the violence of the enemy, that we may be a safeguard unto our most gracious Sovereign Lady; Queen Elizabeth, and her Dominions, and a security for such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions; that the inhabitants of our Commonwealth, may in peace and quietness serve thee our God; and that we may return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of our labours, and with a thankful remembrance of thy mercies to praise and glorify thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN."

1667 ~ Navy Rum ~ 1970

At ten to twelve each forenoon
Since the Navy first began
Jack drinks the health of Nelson
From Jutland to Japan.

He's always done his duty —
To country and the throne
And all he asks in fairness —
Is to leave his tot alone.

Requiem.

You soothed my nerves
and warmed my limbs
And cheered my dismal heart
Procured my wants, obliged my whims
And now its time to part.

And so the time has come old friend
To take the final sup
Our tears are shed. This is the end
So goodbye and bottoms up.

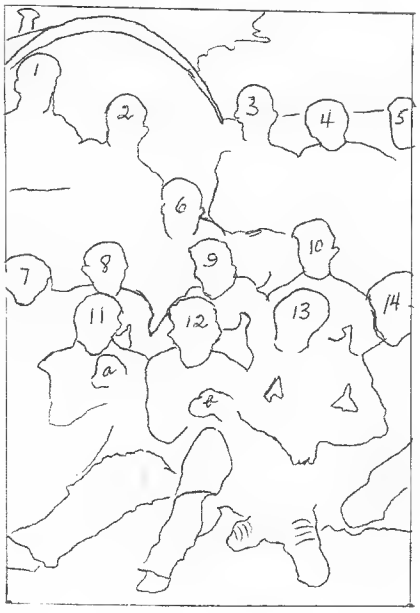


31 ~ July ~ 1970.

L.R.H.

RCN Beach Commando W-1 at Cowes, Isle of Wight
HMS Vectis (Pines Camp), May 1944



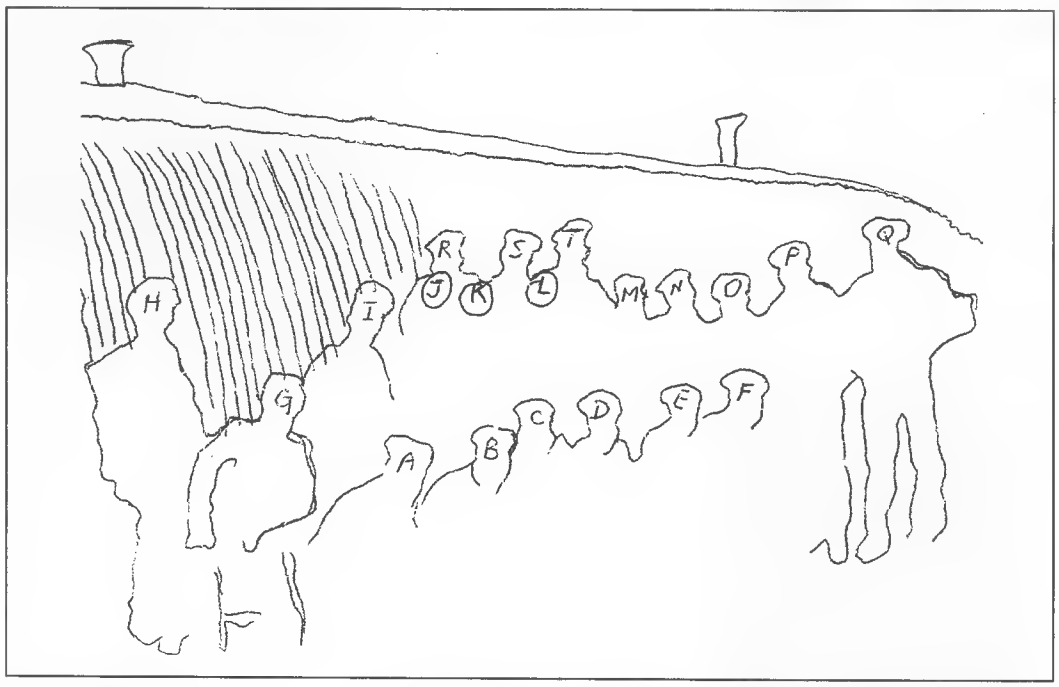


1. Crough, R.
2. Newell, W.
3. Platjouw, J.
4. Therien, A.
5. Smiley, D.
6. Casbourne, J.
7. Steel, H.
8. Allen, J.
9. Pendlebury, A.
10. Stone, G.
11. Burse, R.
12. Smith, H.D.
13. (unidentified)
14. Watkins, I.

a & b -- puppies

RCN Beach Commando W-1 at Ardentinny, Scotland
HMS Armadillo, Winter 1943-44





A. Pendlebury, A.
B. *
C. Watkins, I.
D. Fox, J.
E. Joyce, J.
F. Reade, J.
G. Therien, A.
H. Sutherland, D.M.
I. *
J. Burse, R.
K. Albrechtson, F.
L. *
M. Sutherland, J.
N. Smiley, D.
O. Jarrett, G.
P. Crowhust, K.
Q. Finley, G.
R. *
S. Smith, R.E.
T. Hildreth, C.

*unidentified



(Left to Right)
standing: F. Albrechtson, H. Smith, J. Read
on bench: G. Vilneff, R. Crough, A. Pendlebury
on ground: D. Warren

Hove, Sussex, April 1944



Unloading stores, HMS Armadillo
Scotland, December 1943
Left foreground: G. Jarrett
Back to camera: F. Angus



Route march, Exbury to Calshot
HMS Mastodon, February 1944
L/R: W. Newell, A. Therien, J. Fox, D. Smiley



RCN Beach Commando "W"
Sardine-packed in an LCM
HMS Armadillo, Scotland
December 1943

CERTIFICATE FOR WOUNDS AND HURTS

These are to Certify the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that

(Name in full) (Rank or Rating) (Official Number)

GAMBLIN, Fredrick O'Sea V. 59716

belonging to His Majesty's Ship "Lizard"

"Injured" or "Wounded" was Injured on 8-4-1944 as shown on the reverse hereof;

and that I/we, having enquired into the circumstances in which he received the† stated, and having heard the evidence of

(Insert Name and Rank or Rating)

who witnessed the accident, consider that he was then actually On His Majesty's Service in H.M.S. LIZARD

Here describe the manner in which the injury was received and also the particular act of duty or form of physical recreation in which it was incurred as required by Article 1419 of the King's Regulations.

O'sea. Gamblin was present in a class under instruction, when myself R.L. Shales LT. RCNVR and two leading hands were present. Ws T.R. HARBY. Ws D McINTYRE

Gamblin had climbed a rope scaling ladder and was endeavouring to cross a log at the top when he accidently let go and fell to the ground. His fall hurt his wrist and it was reported to me immediately after

He was on duty at the time

Delete when case is investigated by Captain.

Signatures and Ranks of Investigating Officers: R.L. Shales LT. RCNVR.

Signature of Officer or Man injured: F.J. Gamblin

Date 19 Signature of Captain

H.M.S.

‡ *NOTE: The grant of this Certificate to a Petty Officer or Man is to be noted on his Service Certificate and in the Ships Ledger.*

ENTERED ON CASUALTY SHEET H.M.C.S. "NIOBE" 20700 15/8/44

1944 W.-4846; 25000. 3/43. G. 961. C. & Ltd.

Report of Wound or Hurt.

(Name in full) (Rank or Rating) (Official Number)

GAMBLIN, Frederick O'Sea V. 5917/6 V. 59146

belonging to His Majesty's Ship "Lizard"

"Injury" or "Wound"

sustained the following Injury on 8th April 1944

Here describe minutely the nature of the injury sustained as required by Article 1419 of the King's Regulations

Fracture ~~of~~ Scaphoid bone. Lt. Wrist. No displacement.

Personal Description

Age about 19 years. Born at, or near Sussex. N.B.

Height 5 ft. 9¼ ins. Hair ~~Red~~ Eyes ~~Blue~~ Complexion fair

Particular Marks or Scars

Scar on right leg

Signature of Medical Officer.

Date 12. 4. 1944 R. S. Pearson

Surgeon Commander, R.N.V.R.

To be completed if Hurt Certificate (overleaf) is NOT awarded.

"Officer" or "Man"

†"Injury" or "Wound"

I/we, having enquired into the circumstances in which the above named* sustained the† stated, and having heard the evidence of

(Insert Name and Rank or Rating)

who witnessed the accident, consider that he was not at the time On His Majesty's Service.

Delete when case is investigated by Captain.

Signatures and Ranks of Investigating Officers.

Signature of Officer or Man injured.

Date 19 Signature of Captain

H.M.S.

Sta. 115/39.
P.M.1089/39.

P.T.O.

WOOD SCULPTURES
(5 x 2 x 2)

by Ivor Watkins, 1992





from OD Deck Swabber to AB Beach Commando

Ivor Watkins





Bowman canoeist

Above: Visiting the author at Indian Lake, north of Ottawa, summer 1993

Left: On a day off near Portuguese Cove, N.S., summer 1943, several months prior to being drafted to beach commandos



Displaying his Fairbairn-Sykes commando dagger outside his home, Pointe Claire, P.Q., May 1992

HMS Armadillo, Ardentinny, Scotland, November 1943

"The Group of Eleven"



(Left to Right)
back row: J. Ross, A. Watt, R. Nelson,
D. Kroshewsky, C. Luff
middle row: J. Offless, A. Petty, W. Murphy
front row: J. White, J. Adams, D. Trewin

National Archives of Canada | Archives nationales du Canada

Canada

STATEMENT OF SERVICE
in the
CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Name:	Reginald Clarence BURSE	
Service Rank or Number:	V-48280	
Branch of Service:	Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve	
Date and Place of Birth:	19 August 1922	Burlington, Ont.
Date and Place of Appointment, Enlistment or Enrolment:	25 September 1942	Hamilton, Ont.
Theatres of Service:	Canada, Britain, on the High Seas and Northwest Europe	
Date and Place of Retirement or Discharge:	4 September 1945	Hamilton, Ont.
Type of Retirement or Discharge:	Honourable	
Rank on Retirement or Discharge:	Able Seaman	
Medals and Decorations:	France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp and War Medal 1939-45	
Remarks:	On divisional strength from 25 September 1942 to 25 October 1942	

5 June 1992
Date

Director, Personnel Records Centre

NATIONAL ARCHIVES · ARCHIVES NATIONALES · CANADA

OCT 23 1942 JUL - 7 1943

Fit and ...

Fit

Lt. vaccinated twice

Can. B. 207
100M—3-42 (3733)
N.S. 815-2-207

CANADA

Certificate of Medical Examination of Officers, Men and Boys

NAVAL SERVICE OF CANADA

(R.C.N. OR RESERVE FORCES)

NOTE—This Certificate is to be completed by the Examining Medical Officer and forwarded to the Naval Secretary, Department of National Defence, Ottawa.

I, the undersigned, have examined Reginald C. Bunce

‡candidate for entry as A/S

and I believe him to be *{in all respects fit for His Majesty's Service / ~~unfit for His Majesty's Service for the reason stated below~~} He has signed the Certificate given below in my presence.

‡Strike out if inapplicable *Delete one.

This examination has been made in accordance with the current Instructions as to Medical Standards.

(a) Age	Yrs. 20	Mos. 1	(j) Date of last Vaccination for Smallpox		Twice
(b) Height with bare feet	Feet 5	In. 8	(k) General Development		Good
(c) Weight without clothes	132		(l) Nose, Throat and Tonsils		T.O.
(d) Ears and Hearing	N		(m) Heart and Lungs		N
(e) Chest Girth	Max. 36	Min. 33½	Mean 34½	(n) Abdomen Hernia, etc.	N
(f) Teeth	Deficient 5	Defective 3	Dentures —	(o) Limbs and Joints	Good Condition
(g) Vision by Snellens Types	without glasses Rt. 6/6	Lt. 6/6		(p) Skin	Clear
	with glasses where worn Rt.	Lt.		(q) Anus Haemorrhoids	N
(h) Colour Vision	Ishihara R.C.N. Lantern	normal		(r) Testes Varicocele	N
(i) Chest x-ray {~~not taken~~ / approved / positive / doubtful}	14/12/42			(s) Urine	Negative

CERTIFICATE TO BE SIGNED BY CANDIDATE

I hereby certify that to the best of my belief I have never suffered from Fits, †*Incontinence of Urine*, Discharge from the Ears, or any other disease likely to render me unfit for His Majesty's Service. ‡I am willing to undergo, after entry, such dental treatment, vaccination, or inoculations as may be authorized.

*The exact meaning of this is to be clearly explained to the Candidate by the Examining Medical Officer ‡Strike out if inapplicable.

Signature of Candidate

When a Candidate is subject to a defect or disability, the following information is to be inserted:

This Candidate is the subject of

*{which renders him medically unfit for service, / not considered of sufficient importance to cause his rejection, he being desirable in other respects.

*Delete one

IF REJECTED write here UNFIT in block letters

Dated at Halifax the 14th of December 19 42

Examining Medical Officer

(Rank) Surg. Lt.

P625065

Can. B. 207B
150M—4-45 (1646)
N.S. 7570—B207B

CERTIFICATE OF MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF OFFICERS, MEN AND BOYS, NAVAL SERVICE OF CANADA, ON DISCHARGE

(R.C.N. or Reserve Forces)

NOTE.—This Certificate is to be completed by the Examining Medical Officer and forwarded to the Secretary of The Naval Board, Department of National Defence, Ottawa

I, the undersigned, have examined BURSE R.C. A.B. V 48280
(Name, rating, Official No.)
on discharge from the Royal Canadian Naval Service.

This examination has been made in accordance with the current Instructions as to Medical Standards.

(a) Age	Yrs. 22 Mos. 11	(j) Date of last Vaccination for Smallpox	1942
(b) Height with bare feet	Feet 5 In. 7¾	(k) General Development	good
(c) Weight without clothes	139	(l) Nose, Throat and Tonsils	normal
(d) Ears and Hearing	normal	(m) Heart and Lungs 120-76	normal
(e) Chest Girth	Max. 37 Min. 34 Mean 35½	(n) Abdomen Hernia, etright	slight laxness in ring.
(f) Teeth	Deficient 6 Defective Dentures	(o) Limbs and Joints	normal
(g) Vision by Snellens Types	without glasses Rt. 20-20 Lt. 20-30	(p) Skin	normal
	with glasses where worn Rt. Lt.	(q) Anus Haemorrhoids	normal
(h) Colour Vision	Ishihara normal R.C.N. Lantern	(r) Testes Varicocele	normal
(i) Chest x-ray approved / doubtful	D 3222	(s) Urine	sug. alb. neg.

mazzini neg.

CERTIFICATE TO BE SIGNED BY CANDIDATE

I hereby certify that I have been fully examined (unclothed), that the findings have been read to me, that I am satisfied with the thoroughness of this examination, and that I do not claim to suffer from any disability due to or aggravated by service.

Rig Burse
Signature of Candidate

N.B.—When the officer or rating is subject to a defect not already noted on his Medical Form Can. B.207 on entry, Medical Board of Survey Form C.N.M. 227 will be required.)

Dated at HALIFAX the 14 of July 19 45

Examining Medical Officer

(Rank)

Discharged to Ter 19/7/45

From Russ Nelson's Rogues Gallery



Russ at Kew Gardens, Surrey, 1943



D. McIntyre, J. Adams & J. Offless
are identifiable in this "Group of Seven"
HMS Mastodon, Exbury, March 1944



L/R: J. Adams, J. White, V. Downey
Lymington, Hants, May 1944



L/R: R. Nelson, J. Adams, D. Kennedy,
W. Burden, A. Petty
Lymington, Hants, May 1944



L/R: J. Adams, W. Murphy, J. Forsyth
Lymington, Hants, May 1944

From Lucien Quesnel's Archives



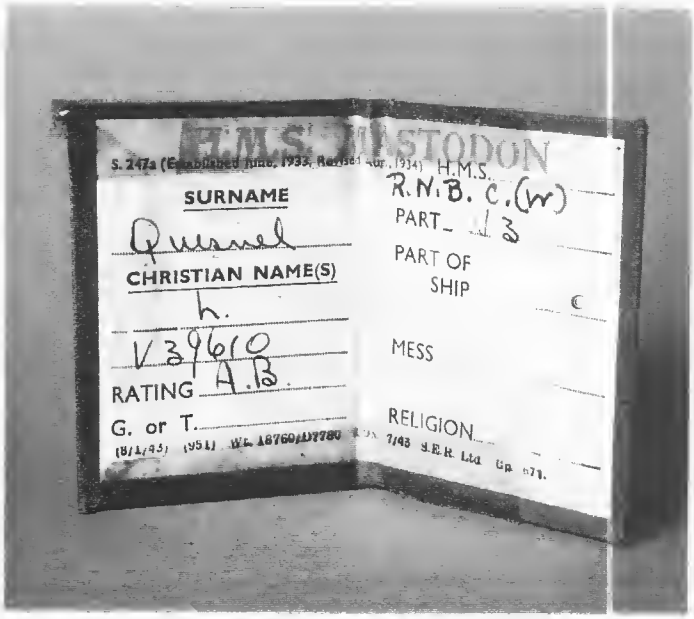
Outside his Montreal home,

Winter 1944-45

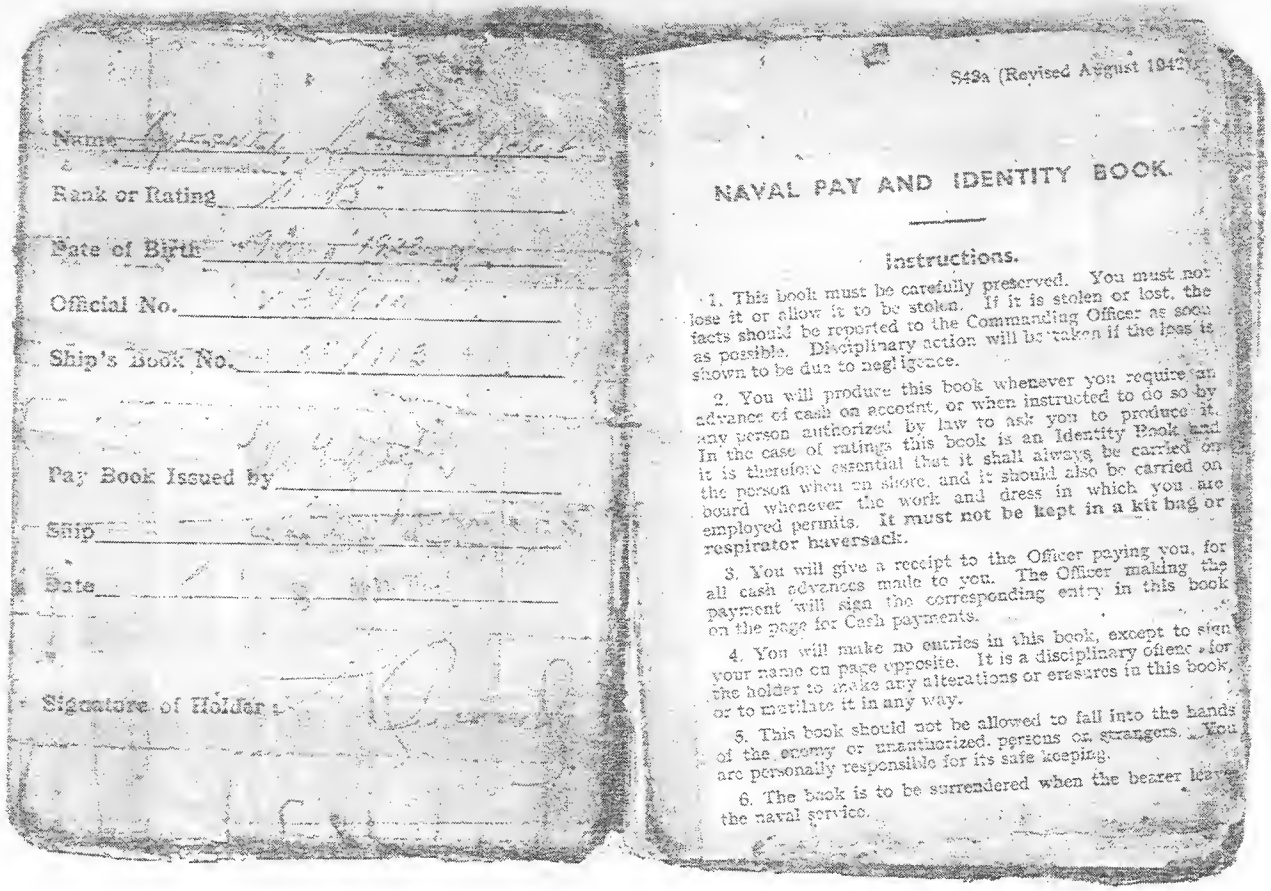


Barbering A. Germaine,

HMS Vectis (Pines Camp),
Cowes, Isle of Wight, May 1944



Lucien's Passbook, HMS Mastodon,
(Exbury, Hants, March 1944)



Name

Rank or Rating

Date of Birth

Official No.

Ship's Book No.

Pay Book Issued by

Ship

Date

Signature of Holder

S49a (Revised August 1942)

NAVAL PAY AND IDENTITY BOOK.

Instructions.

1. This book must be carefully preserved. You must not lose it or allow it to be stolen. If it is stolen or lost, the facts should be reported to the Commanding Officer as soon as possible. Disciplinary action will be taken if the loss is shown to be due to negligence.

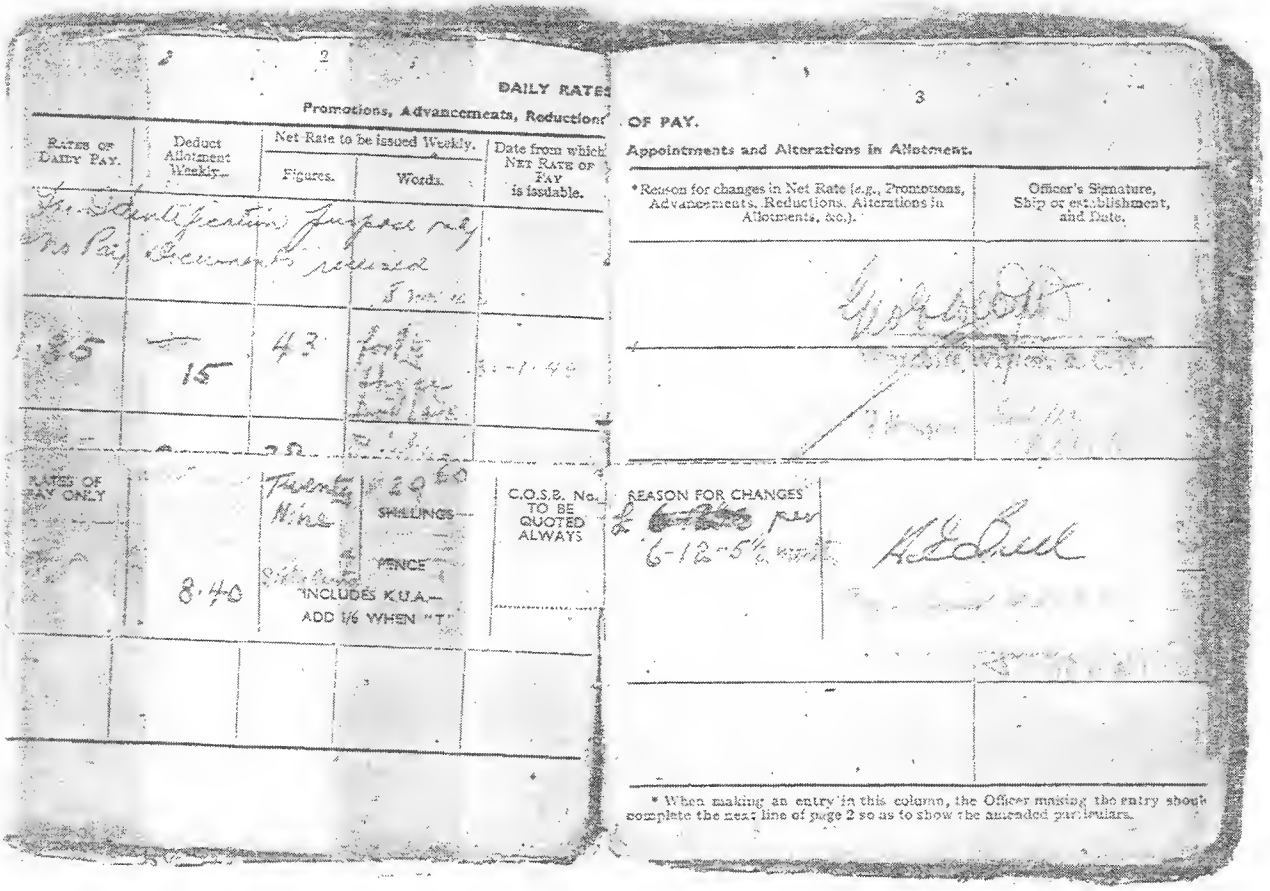
2. You will produce this book whenever you require an advance of cash on account, or when instructed to do so by any person authorized by law to ask you to produce it. In the case of ratings this book is an Identity Book and it is therefore essential that it shall always be carried on the person when on shore, and it should also be carried on board whenever the work and dress in which you are employed permits. **It must not be kept in a kit bag or respirator haversack.**

3. You will give a receipt to the Officer paying you, for all cash advances made to you. The Officer making the payment will sign the corresponding entry in this book on the page for Cash payments.

4. You will make no entries in this book, except to sign your name on page opposite. It is a disciplinary offence for the holder to make any alterations or erasures in this book, or to mutilate it in any way.

5. This book should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy or unauthorized persons or strangers. You are personally responsible for its safe keeping.

6. The book is to be surrendered when the bearer leaves the naval service.



2

DAILY RATES

Promotions, Advancements, Reductions

Rates of Daily Pay.	Deduct Allotment Weekly.	Net Rate to be issued Weekly. Figures.	Net Rate to be issued Weekly. Words.	Date from which Net Rate of Pay is issuable.
1.85	15	43	forty three	3-1-40

RATES OF PAY ONLY

8.40

Twenty Nine SHILLINGS 2960

PENCE

INCLUDES K.U.A.— ADD 1/6 WHEN "T"

C.O.S.B. No. TO BE QUOTED ALWAYS

3

OF PAY.

Appointments and Alterations in Allotment.

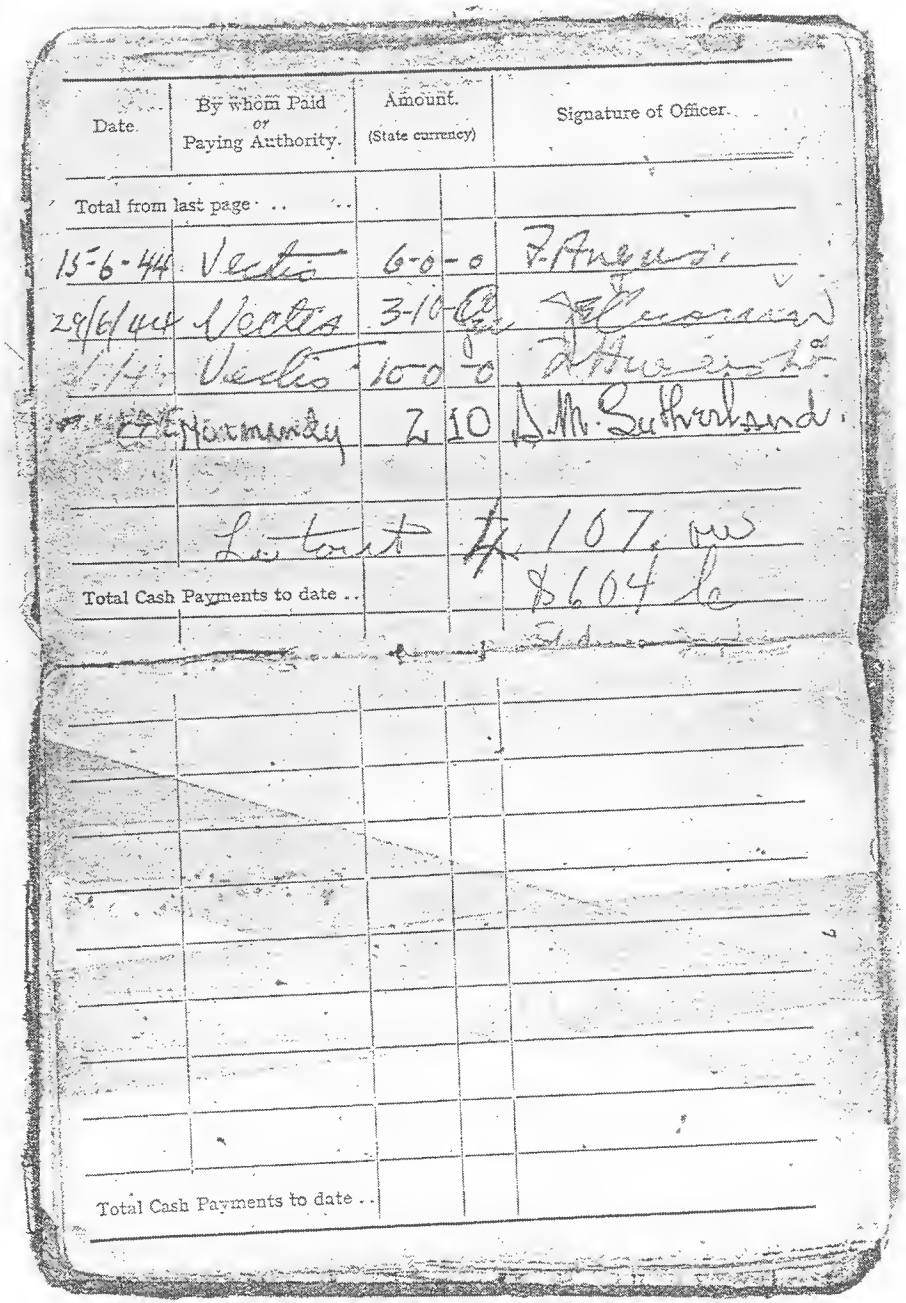
* Reason for changes in Net Rate (e.g., Promotions, Advancements, Reductions, Alterations in Allotments, &c.).	Officer's Signature, Ship or establishment, and Date.

REASON FOR CHANGES

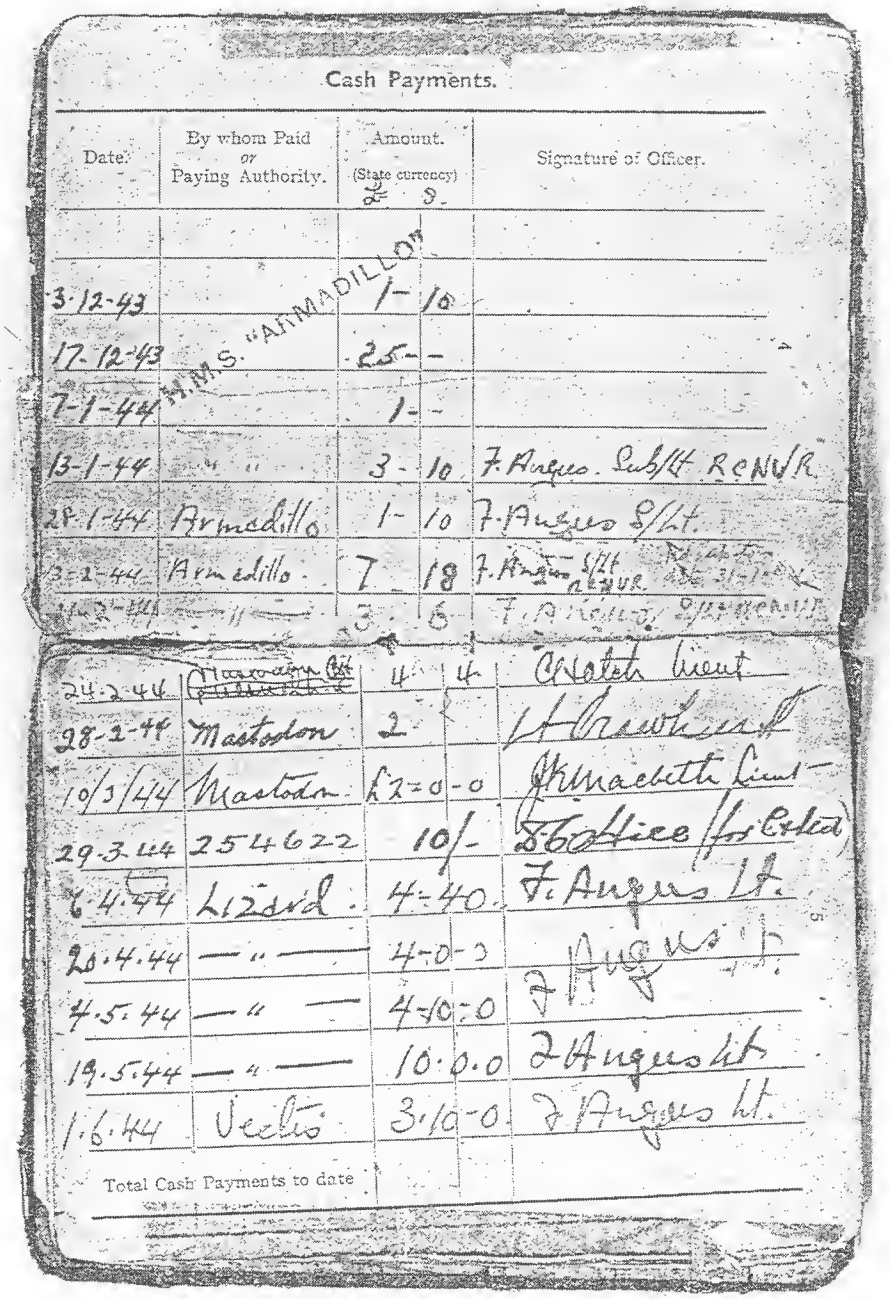
6-12-5½ per

* When making an entry in this column, the Officer making the entry should complete the next line of page 2 so as to show the amended particulars.

Extracts from his Naval Pay and Identity Book



Date.	By whom Paid or Paying Authority.	Amount. (State currency)		Signature of Officer.
Total from last page ..				
15-6-44	Vectis	6	0	F. Angus.
29/6/44	Vectis	3	10	F. Angus
1/44	Vectis	100	0	F. Angus Lt.
22	Normandy	2	10	D.M. Sutherland.
	Lieut	£	107	0s
Total Cash Payments to date ..			$604	1c



Cash Payments.

Date.	By whom Paid or Paying Authority.	Amount. (State currency) £	s.	Signature of Officer.
3-12-43	H.M.S. "ARMADILLO"	1	10	
17-12-43		25	-	
7-1-44		1	-	
13-1-44	" "	3	10	F. Angus. Sub/Lt RCNVR
28-1-44	Armadillo	1	10	F. Angus S/Lt.
3-2-44	Armadillo	7	18	F. Angus S/Lt RCNVR
[illegible]	"	3	6	F. Angus S/Lt RCNVR
24.2.44	Mastodon	4	4	Watch Lieut
28-2-44	Mastodon	2		Lt Crawford
10/3/44	Mastodon	£2	0-0	J.K. Macbeth Lieut
29.3.44	254622	10	/-	Postal Order for Cadet
7.4.44	Lizard	4	40	F. Angus Lt.
20.4.44	— " —	4	0-0	F Angus Lt.
4.5.44	— " —	4	10-0	F Angus Lt.
19.5.44	— " —	10	0.0	F Angus Lt.
1.6.44	Vectis	3	10-0	F Angus Lt.
Total Cash Payments to date				

Extracts from his Naval Pay and Identity Book

12

Leave granted for periods exceeding 48 hours and free travel warrants issued.

From	To	No. of Days.	Warrant No.
Dec 21st	Jan 2nd 44	12.	A B 506520
28-2-44	6-3-44	4	C J 130625

13

Leave granted for periods exceeding 48 hours and free travel warrants issued.

From	To	No. of Days.	Warrant No.

14

Issues of gratuitous or Loan Clothing.

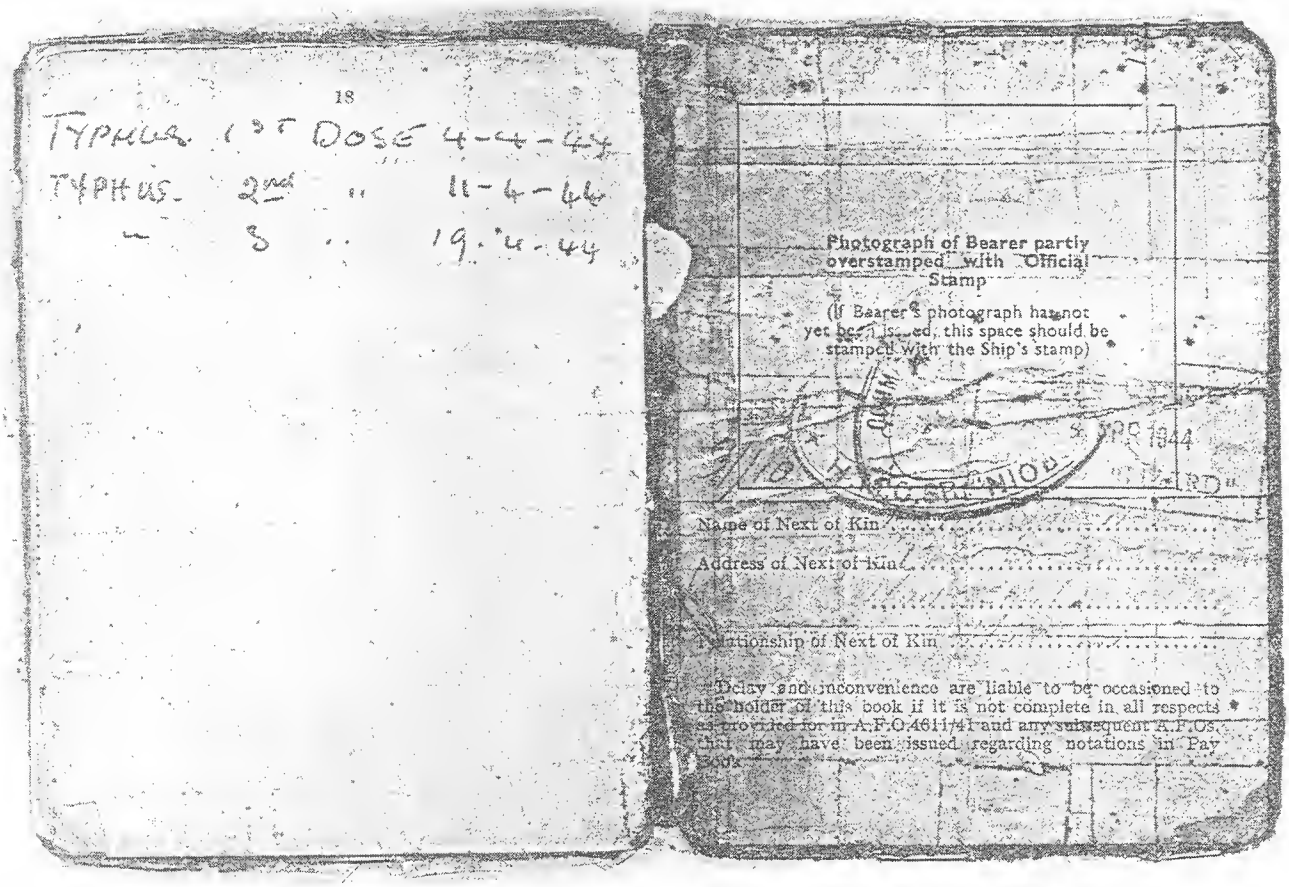
Date.	Items Issued.
17/11/43	Comforts issued
25-11-43	C.R.E. Comforts } ISSUED N.L. Ditty Bag } J.G. Walker S/LR.C.W.R.
7.12.43.	Lifebelt Issued
	Armadale.
28.1.44	1 Pr. Gloves. 7 Anges 8/4.
16.2.44	Extra C.O. Kit issued.
28/8/44	All C.O. Gear Returned
	2 Anges 4/-

15

CLOTHING PURCHASED.

Date (If a shore purchase, also name of retailer).	Value of Clothing purchased.	Amount of K.U.A. for Quarter.	Balance of K.U.A. (Dr. in Red).	Initials of person issuing.
11.11.43	£ 4 6	£ 6	£ 2 1 2	
11.4.44	6 11 6	2 4		
25/8/44	2 2			

Extracts from his Naval Pay and Identity Book



18

TYPHUS 1ST DOSE 4-4-44
TYPHUS 2ND " 11-4-44
" 3 " 19-4-44

Photograph of Bearer partly overstamped with Official Stamp

(If Bearer's photograph has not yet been issued, this space should be stamped with the Ship's stamp)

Name of Next of Kin

Address of Next of Kin

.....

Relationship of Next of Kin

Delay and inconvenience are liable to be occasioned to the holder of this book if it is not complete in all respects as provided for in A.F.O.4611/41 and any subsequent A.F.Os. that may have been issued regarding notations in Pay Books.

Extracts from his Naval Pay and Identity Book

Pages in his Official Military Record

C.N.S. 264 (S. 264)
75M—5-42 (4758)
N.S. 815-9-264

Name Ouesnel Joseph Louis Robert Lucien

Sub-Rating and Seniority O/SMN 18/6/42 Non-Sub

O.N. V-39610 S.B. No. W.B. No.

Joined Ship July 7/43 from Stadaconna

Engagement: Period Hostilities Expires

Date of Birth Aug 19/1924 Religion R.C.

Character Efficiency Date

Badges Class for Conduct 1 Class for Leave 1

Date due for: Next Badge

Progressive Pay

L.S. & G.C. Recommended

Advancement.	Wishes to Pass?	Recommended?	Date Qualified?
Educ. Test Pt.1			
Higher Educ. Test.			
Professional or higher Sub-rating			
do Non-Sub.			

(For ordinary Seamen Form T.S.34 (S.536D) must be used in addition).

Any Non-Service Attainments weaver
P.P.T "fair"

Swimming Qualification Good P.P.T 4/8/42

Athletic capabilities Boxing softball hockey

General Remarks (including intelligence, energy, initiative, powers of command).

Fairly intelligent, good worker but needs watching

H.M.C.S. "Fundy"

Date 12 Oct 1943

~~Officer~~ of Division.

Notes:—(1) This form is to be kept for each rating by the Officer of his Division.
(2) The form is to be completed to date, and signed by the Officer of the Division before the rating changes his Division or Ship.
(3) On a rating changing his Ship or Establishment, Form S.264 is to be transferred with his other papers for the information of the next Officer of Division.

P.T.O.

C.N.S. 264 (S. 264)
75M—5-42 (4758)
N.S. 815-9-264

To: Stadacona 30/11/42
A/S July 15/42

Name Joseph Louis Robert Lucien QUESNEL

Sub-Rating and Seniority O/Sman 18/6/42 Non-Sub

O.N. V-39610 S.B. No. W.B. No.

Joined Ship Sept. 22/42 from H.M.C.S. Cartier

Engagement: Period 18th June, 1942 Expires Duration

Date of Birth 19th August, 1924 Religion R. C.

Character V.G. — Efficiency SAT Date 30/11/42 —

Badges Nil Class for Conduct 1st Class for Leave 1st

Date due for: Next Badge

Progressive Pay

L.S. & G.C. Recommended

Advancement.	Wishes to Pass?	Recommended?	Date Qualified?
Educ. Test Pt. 1			
Higher Educ. Test.			
Professional or higher Sub-rating			
do Non-Sub.			

(For ordinary Seamen Form T.S.34 (S.536D) must be used in addition).

Any Non-Service Attainments Weaver

P.P.T. "fair" 23/9/42

Swimming Qualification Good PPT 4/8/42

Athletic capabilities bowling, softball, hockey.

General Remarks (including intelligence, energy, initiative, powers of command). (I.Q 98 - Average.)

Learns well, works well, an average rating who should do well.

H.M.C.S. "CARTIER"

Maurice Gagnon
Officer of Division.
Lieutenant R.C.N.V.R.

Date 11th September, 1942

Notes:—(1) This form is to be kept for each rating by the Officer of his Division.
(2) The form is to be completed to date, and signed by the Officer of the Division before the rating changes his Division or Ship.
(3) On a rating changing his Ship or Establishment, Form S.264 is to be transferred with his other papers for the information of the next Officer of Division.

P.T.O.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

NAVY ═══ ARMY ═══ AIR FORCE

STATEMENT OF WAR SERVICE GRATUITY

NAME Joseph Louis Robert Lucien QUESNEL
(CHRISTIAN NAMES) (SURNAME)

REGISTER NO. 65391

ADDRESS 5301 Garnier St., Montreal, Que.

FILE NO. NS V39610

DATE 21 Nov./45

SERVICE NO. V-39610

FINAL RANK OR RATING A/A.B.

DATE OF TERMINATION OF OVERSEAS SERVICE 24 July/45

DATE OF DISCHARGE 23 Aug./45

		$ ¢
A. TOTAL QUALIFYING SERVICE	NO. OF DAYS 1136/30 EQUAL TO 37 COMPLETE PERIODS AT $7.50	277.50
B. QUALIFYING OVERSEAS SERVICE NO. OF DAYS 473 LESS nil INELIGIBLE DAYS, EQUAL TO 473 DAYS @ 25c. PER DAY (SEE PAR. 2 OVERLEAF FOR EXPLANATION)		118.25
	SUB TOTAL	395.75
C. SUPPLEMENT FOR OVERSEAS SERVICE — DAILY RATES AT DISCHARGE: PAY $ 1.85; SUBSISTENCE OR LODGING AND PROVISION ALLOWANCE $ 1.25; ADDITIONAL PAY HLM $.13; $; $; DEPENDENTS' ALLOWANCE 1/30 OF $ Nil $ --; TOTAL $ 3.23 X7 = $ 22.61	NO. OF DAYS 473/183 X$ 22.61	58.44
D. WAR SERVICE GRATUITY		454.19
E. DEDUCTIONS — OVERPAYMENT OF PAY AND ALLOWANCES $; DEPENDENTS' ALLOWANCE AND ASSIGNED PAY $		
OTHER DEDUCTIONS	$ Nil	
F. AMOUNT PAYABLE (THIS AMOUNT IS PAYABLE IN 5 MONTHLY INSTALMENTS OF $ 90.83 EACH)		454.19

THE WAR SERVICE GRANTS ACT, 1944, PROVIDES FOR YOUR RE-ESTABLISHMENT CREDIT IN THE AMOUNT SHOWN IN SUB TOTAL OF A. & B. THIS CREDIT IS AVAILABLE TO YOU IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. INQUIRY IN THIS CONNECTION SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS.

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR EXPLANATION OF ITEMS A, B &

G. MONTHLY INSTALMENT NOT TO EXCEED AND ...TE OF PAY ...WANCES $ 3.23 X30 $ 96.90

INSTALM. PAYABLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AMOUNT	90.83	90.83	90.83	90.83	90.83				
CHEQUE NO.									
DATE									

INSTALM. PAYABLE	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
AMOUNT									
CHEQUE NO.									
DATE									

CERTIFICATE I CERTIFY THAT THE AMOUNT HAS BEEN CORRECTLY COMPUTED AND IS PAYABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE WAR SERVICE GRANTS ACT, 1944 AND THE REGULATIONS ISSUED THEREUNDER.

PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
LJM	

TREASURY

CHECKED BY DATE

for Dir Naval Pay Acctg.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

N.V. 17
25,000—2-42 (3665)
N.S. 815-11-17

CERTIFICATE of the SERVICE of

Joseph Louis Robert Lucien QUESNEL

in the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve

Training Headquarters	R.C.N.V.R. Division	Official Number V-3961-D
R.C.N.B. Halifax, N.S.	H.M.C.S. "Cartier"	"
		"

Date of Birth 19th August 1924

Place of Birth Montreal, Quebec

Place of Residence 5301 GARNIER ST., MONTREAL

Trade brought up to Weaver — O.H.F.

Religion Roman Catholic

Can Swim:—P.P.T. for Date 23rd Sept 1942 Signature [illegible] Rank Lt.

P.S.T. Date 19..... Signature Rank

Name and Address of Nearest Relative or Friend (in pencil)

Mother: MIGNONE
1797 St Christophe St
Montreal, Que

PARTICULARS OF SERVICE

Date of Actual Volunteering	Date of Enrolment or re-enrolment	Period Volunteered for	Rating on Enrolment or Re-enrolment
11 June '42	18 June '42	duration	Ord Sea

MEDALS, DECORATIONS, etc.

Date of Award	Date of Presentation	Nature of Decoration

PERSONAL DESCRIPTION

	Height Feet	Height Inches	Chest (mean)	Weight	Hair	Eyes	Complexion	MARKS, WOUNDS, SCARS
On Entry	5	3¼	32	107½	Brown	Brown	Medium	nil
On re-enrolment—6 years' Service								
On re-enrolment—12 years' Service								
Further Description if necessary								

TRANSFER BETWEEN DIVISIONS

From	To	Date

TRANSFER—LISTS A AND B

List	Date	Authority

NAVAL TRAINING and ACTIVE SERVICE

Year	SHIP OR ESTABLISHMENT	NON-SUB. RATE	RATING	FROM	TO	CAUSE OF DISCHARGE
1942	H.M.C.S. "Cartier"		Ord Sman	18 June '42	14 July '42	
			On Active Service 15 July '42			
1942	H.M.C.S. "Cartier"		Ord Sman	15 July '42	21 Sep '42	Discharged
1942	H.M.C.S. "Cornwallis"		Ord Sman	22 Sep '42	2 Nov	Demobilized
—11—	—11— (Clarey)		—11—	2 Nov	27 Nov	Reference
—11—	Cornwallis		—11—	28 Nov	30 Nov 42	R.C.N.T. post
	Stadacona		—11—	1 Nov 42	27 Nov 42	ITC 17 + 5 17 dy
	Cornwallis		—11—	28 Nov 42	30 Nov 42	25 July '45
	Stadacona		—11—	1 Dec 42	6 July '43	
	Stadacona (Hundy)		—11—	7 July '43	14 July '43	Rehabilitation
	Stadacona (Hundy)		A.B.	15 July '43	5 Oct '43	Leave
	Stadacona		"	6 Oct '43	19 Oct '43	—
	Niobe		"	20 Oct '43	6 Nov '43	Plain Slathes
	H.M.S. Armadillo		—11—	7 Nov '43	16 Jan '44	Gratuity 100.00
	H.M.S. Mastadon		—11—	17 Jan '44	16 July '44	
	H.M.C.S. Cartier		—11—	17 July '44	2 Apl '44	
	RcnBc "W" Lizard		—11—	3 Apl '44	27 June '44	
	RcnBc "W" Vestris		—11—	28 June '44	6 July '44	
	Juno Area (France)		—11—	7 July '44	21 Aug '44	
	RcnBc "W" (Vestris)		—11—	22 Aug '44	29 Aug '44	
	Niobe		—11—	30 Aug '44	10 Sep '44	
	Stadacona		—11—	11 Sep '44	30 Sep '44	
	Peregrine		—11—	1 Oct '44	29 Oct '44	

Wounds Received in Action, Hurt Certificates, Meritorious Service, Special Recommendations, Prizes or other Grants

Date	Details	Captain's Signature
30 Apl '45	Annual 2 C/H = B. 168244. Stadia	
28 Sep '43	Lte 2 Cr = B-93425 14-0 13 Oct '43	

Normandy, Juno Sector, Nan Beach
Bernières-sur-Mer, July 27, 1990
Skip and daughter Linda



Outside reconstructed former German fort
used as shelter by "W" Beach Commando
Summer 1994



Strolling westward along the beach

Skip and son Gerald, July 27, 1990



The memorial on Nan Beach near Bernières-sur-Mer commemorating the June 6 1944 Allied landings in Normandy which led to the liberation of Europe



Juno Sector, Mike Beach, Courseulles-sur-Mer

LEST WE FORGET



CANADIAN MILITARY CEMETERY, BENY-SUR-MER, NORMANDY
2,049 headstones mark graves of mainly
Third Infantry Division and also 15 airmen

Book of Honour
gives name on and location of
each headstone





SERGEANT W. LA HAISE, C.12353
ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY SERVICE
CORPS
OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA
2ND JULY 1944 -------- AGE 27

An illustrated account of a unique World War II Canadian naval unit.

Part I, based on official Canadian archival records, chronicles its October 1943 formation, eight months training in Scotland, and seven week stint, as part of Operation NEPTUNE, on Juno Sector's Normandy beaches.

Part II, presented in the form of eleven anecdotal "PORTHOLES" related by members of the unit, spins a series of unofficial, off-the-record yarns.